



GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

A SIMPLE HEART

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

ÉMILE ADAN

PREFACE BY A. DE CLAYE



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, the most remarkable French novelist of the second half of the nineteenth century, was born at Rouen, on the 12th December, 1821, and died at Croisset on the 8th of May, 1880. He was the son of a medical man of repute, and the fourth of a family of six children. He himself commenced the study of medicine, but soon conceived an absolute repugnance for it, and abandoned it for literature. He first turned his attention to poetry, taking as his models Victor Hugo and Lord Byron; but was not long before he definitely gave it up for prose.

After several years of work he brought out, in the *Revue de Paris* (1857), the famous novel *Madame Bovary*, which was his first published book. Some eight years before he had written some fragments of a work which formed the rough outline of the *Temptation of Saint Antony*.

Flaubert's reputation dates from the publication of *Madame Bovary*. The book was attacked as being prejudicial to morality, but not condemned, and obtained a great success. It is the story of the wife of a stupid and commonplace doctor, who is utterly incapable of appreciating her character and aspirations after something more refined. After numerous lapses, she finally commits suicide. About the same time Flaubert made a journey to Tunis and the ruins of Carthage, whence he brought back the materials for a second romance, which was announced for three years under different titles, and finally published under that of *Salammbô* (1862). This work deals with the last struggle between Rome and Carthage. This imaginary reconstruction of Carthaginian civilisation during the period of the Second Punic War, gave rise to various literary polemics, archaeological rather than literary. The work did not excite nearly the same amount of enthusiasm as *Madame Bovary*, and led to a dispute between the author and Sainte-Beuve, who had strongly supported the earlier work. In 1866 Flaubert was decorated with the Legion of Honour.

Three years later appeared *Sentimental Educa-*

tion, a *Young Man's History*, which was a return to his earlier style, and was far less popular, owing to lack of central interest. The *Temptation of Saint Antony*, which appeared in 1874, was a kind of philosophical drama, a "splendid phantasmagoria," worked up from the early fragments already referred to as having appeared in *L'Artiste* (1857). During the same year, he produced a play, *Le Candidat*, which fell flat, and was only given a few times at the Vaudeville Theatre. This was not his only attempt at theatrical work: he had written a kind of fairy opera, *Le Château des Fleurs*, which he vainly endeavoured to get accepted by the theatrical managers. It was published in his *Œuvres Posthumes*.

In 1877 appeared his last book (exclusive of posthumous work), entitled *Trois Contes*, which shows him at his best. The first, dealing with the daughter of *Herodias*, is reminiscent of *Salammbô*; *Un Cœur Simple*¹ exhibits all the power of *Madame Bovary*, while at the same time it is absolutely free from the objectionable features of the latter; the third, *La Légende de St. Julien l'Hospitalier*, is on the lines of the *Temptation*, but has

¹ The present volume.

a more central interest. He died at the moment when he was putting the finishing touches to the last chapter of a new novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, partially published after his death in the *Revue politique et littéraire*, and in book-form in 1881. It contains an account of the attempts of two retired men of the middle class to interest themselves in literary and scientific researches.

Flaubert's posthumous works include his *Letters to George Sand*; *Par les Champs et par les Grèves*, first published in the *Gaulois*, and containing, amongst other fragments, a *Study of Rabelais*, a *Letter to the Municipal Council of Rouen*, which had refused to give the name of the poet Louis Bouilhet to one of the city fountains, and a very voluminous *Correspondence*.

PREFACE.

I.

HER name was Félicité, and she knew nothing of life save its trials. She became attached to everything that came near her ; it was a need of her heart and also of her nature. She devoted herself to the service of others, just as water flows down a slope, just as a bird sings. In the goodness of her soul she had faith in that of other people and things ; this was for her an easy task, for she forgot an injury that was done to her, while she looked on the acceptance of her devotion as a favour. She met only with mortifications. Behold, nevertheless, the advantage of kindness, — I was about to say the profitableness ; she consoled herself for treacheries or deceptions by exercising anew her faculty of self-denial. And, finally, her death was as easy as her life had been hard. She expired during a pious ceremony, the

chantings of which no longer reached her poor ears, — the ears of a deaf old maid ; but the perfume of the incense mounted up to her.

The study of this character is the subject of the work which Flaubert has called a "Tale," and to which he has given the title of "A Simple Heart."

A professional psychologist would have proceeded by way of analysis, occasionally interrupted by reflections and dissertations. But Flaubert was, above everything else, a painter ; his analysis is descriptive. It is in relating the story of a life that he penetrates into the recesses of a soul. Fiévée has written somewhere, perhaps in the preface to "Suzette's Dowry:" "It is easier to reason than to paint. Logicians too often invent and evoke conventional beings ; the painter, on the contrary, is compelled to be precise in his drawing and exact in his colouring. We are not without examples of false methods of reasoning being forced upon us ; but a false touch wounds the eye. The superficial knowledge of a person, or of an epoch, may suffice for one who desires to give vent to theories with regard to them ; but he alone can bring back their lineaments to life who has lived

in intimate connection with them, and who knows them thoroughly."

They are really clothed with flesh and blood, they are definitely fixed in the pages of Flaubert, — the lineaments of the servant-maid, whose calm physiognomy attracted him. And, at the same time, a corner of the life of a small provincial town in the first half of our century has been unveiled for us. The task was all the more difficult because no important event had marked the existence of the humble heroine, and because she moved in the midst of dull surroundings, insignificant at first sight, through which the observer had only to pass without finding anything there to relate or to criticise. The writer has here been a creator; he has extracted abundant materials almost out of nothing. He has displayed an art all the more admirable because it is an art that conceals itself, an art so fine as to be invisible to the common herd. When we have read this tale, we find it necessary to read it again; every word tells; every phrase has its value; there is nothing to be added, and nothing that can be abridged.

We even feel that there vibrates in it a note of emotion, almost of tenderness, in which the impec-

cable artist has rarely indulged. We acknowledge to ourselves that there is in these pages, as the saying is nowadays, something "that has lived."

The explanation is furnished to us by Flaubert's niece, Madame Commanville, whose "Intimate Personal Recollections" possesses such a deep interest. Here is what she tells us as to the origin of "A Simple Heart" and as to the circumstances under which her uncle wrote this story:

"Many original figures remained engraved in his memory of the days when he sojourned at Trouville, amongst others that of an old sailor, Captain Barbet, and that of his daughter, Barbette, a little hunchbacked girl, who was always screaming at her monkeys; in addition, that of Doctor Billard, and that of Père Couillere, Mayor of the Commune, at whose house they took meals which used to last for hours. When he was writing 'A Simple Heart,' he recalled to mind those years. Madame Aubain, her two children, the house in which she lives, all the details so true, so vividly realised, of this simple history, have a striking exactitude. Madame Aubain was my grandmother's aunt (Gustave Flaubert's mother); Felicité and her parrot have lived.

“In the last years of his life my uncle found an extreme fascination in reviving his youth. He has written ‘A Simple Heart’ after his mother’s death. To paint the town in which she was born, the hearth round which she had played, her cousins, the companions of her childhood, was to find her again; and this sweet emotion has helped to draw from his pen his most touching pages,—those perhaps in which he has, more than anywhere else, allowed the man to reveal himself through the veil of the writer. Let us merely recall that scene between Madame Aubain and her servant-maid, when they place together in a row the trifling objects that belonged to Virginie. A big, black straw hat that belonged to my grandmother awakened in my uncle a similar emotion. He took down the relic from the nail, looked at it in silence; his eyes grew moist, and he replaced it respectfully.”

These pious confidences bring to light one side of Flaubert’s nature which he did not affect to reveal in his works,—the sensitive side. So, then, this time it is on his personal recollections that he has worked; he has partly applied to himself his process of moral dissection. Whereas, on other

occasions, he has devoted himself to living by the power of imagination the lives of his characters, he has here revived the memory of his own impression, of his own emotions, and has described them.

II.

The same method of analysis and description has been employed by him in the two other portions of the collection which he published in 1877, under the title, "Three Tales." Applied to subjects essentially different, the method has produced effects of astonishing variety; it has resulted in a work harmoniously arranged, which is unique. These three tales are, in one form or another, three legends which are pictures, and pictures that are living.

"Herodias" is the East in ancient times; we find there its scenery and its architecture, and, above all, its spiritual condition at the most solemn moment in the history of humanity, — during the preaching of Saint John the Baptist on the eve of Christ's appearance on the scene. Colossal transformations are taking place. Rome has effected the conquest of the world; the Gospel is about to

make that of hearts and of intellects. What people were thinking of at that decisive hour in the palace of a tetrarch of Judea, what they were doing there, what was to be seen there, the author explains to us, represents to us, and brings before us with an extraordinary power of evocation.

Then comes "A Simple Heart," that narrative whose framework I have indicated.

The third "Tale" transports us into the heart of the Middle Ages, into the midst of mysticism. The work is purely one of imagination from the standpoint of facts; it constitutes a document dealing with the modes of feeling in the ages of burning faith, when Saint Julian the Hospitable waged war, hunted, prayed, macerated his body, and reached heaven while performing an act of sublime charity.

Flaubert considered that these three parts formed one whole; and he proved it by the care which he took to present them at the same time to the reader. He intended to demonstrate, by their points of union and by their contrasts, the flexibility of this method and its possible adaptation to the most varying data. The publisher, in issuing an edition of the three "Tales" in a most

artistic and luxurious style, has shown respect for the wishes of the author. Each of these three magnificent volumes, in truth, has or will have a distinct paging. It is none the less certain that it is a collection, and that bibliophilists who are fortunate enough to possess one of these three beautiful works ought to possess the other two.

III.

“A Simple Heart” is presented to us with illustrations by M. Émile Adan.

A painter and a water-colour artist, M. Adan occupies a distinguished place in our French school. Every year, for some time past, his pictures have attracted attention at the Palais d’Industrie. Several of them have been highly appreciated; many of them have been vulgarised by engraving and photography. Every one is specially familiar with his “Autumn Evening,” that work so meditative and penetrating; his “Ferryman’s Daughter,” which is at the Museum of the Luxembourg; his “Female Herb-burners,” etc. He excels in rustic subjects, without prejudice to others. He has harvest women and female haymakers who are not

those of Millet or of Jules Breton, — for he imitates nobody, — but who are their worthy rivals.

His talent is characterised at the same time by sincerity and grace. He is inspired by nature, but it is her lovable side that attracts him. His male and female peasants are agreeable to look at. Are they less real for being so? I cannot admit that a peasant should necessarily be in every case of unpleasant aspect. M. de Florian brings upon the scene shepherds who, with ribands in their hats, a crook in one hand and the other over the heart, were perfectly fanciful. Since then, under the pretext of presenting our husbandmen as they are, they have been shown to us as degraded beings; artists have generalised from observations of individual cases; the types which it has thus been sought to evoke are less inoffensive than that of Florian, — they are certainly as false.

I am strongly of opinion that, by a requirement otherwise improper, we imposed on M. Émile Adan the obligation of choosing between one or other of these conventional types; he would paint Nemorin; he would clothe Estelle with the most seductive colours of his palette. Happily, he is free to keep at an equal distance from exaggerations of the

opposite kind ; he takes advantage of this to adhere to the truth, which he makes poetic without distorting it.

A man may be a great painter and not have the capacity needed for the illustration of a book. M. Émile Adan possesses this capacity. The regretted publisher, Jouast, who was an authority on the subject, had remarked his aptitudes from this special point of view, and urged him in this direction. This publisher made him one of his principal artistic collaborators ; and from coöperation with one skilled in the production of books, M. Émile Adan came forth armed *cap-à-pie* for difficult tasks.

Since 1880 he distinguished himself by his illustration of the "Fables of La Fontaine," an edition known as that of "Bibliophilists." His dozen drawings, engraved by Lerat, only make us regret that a greater number of subjects had not been dealt with ; but, as we know, Jouast did not make an excessive use of figures in his publications ; book-lovers had not yet felt those demands to which he helped to give birth. It is said that appetite grows by what it feeds on. Jouast was one of those who awakened the taste for artistic

editions; now bibliophilists require the abundant and savoury feasts served up to them by M. Ferroud.

I would be carried away too far if I expatiated on the other works of M. Émile Adan; nevertheless, I desire to mention one book which likewise forms part of the Jouast collection, — “The Daughters of Fire,” by G. de Nerval. Our artist has placed at the head of the five stories, of which the work is collectively composed, five compositions which are masterpieces.

But never yet has M. Émile Adan displayed his qualities so extensively, so brilliantly, so completely, as in the illustration of “A Simple Heart.” His vignettes are true pictures. Look, for instance, at the young girl who has charge of the cattle drinking, face downwards, the water of the pools; look at the procession of Pont l’Évêque. Amongst the plates out of the text I would direct your attention to that in which “the young man of substantial appearance” pays the poultry-maid the honour of asking her to dance. And the scene of the first communion! And that of the processional altar! And all the others! Genius flings about her products there with a lavish hand; it is

not spared even in the case of the parrot, who has not the advantage of playful changes of physiognomy. There is a superabundance of poetry in these illustrations; watch, for example, Félicité watering the flowers over the tomb of poor little Virginie; it is a marvellous exhibition of sentiment.

These compositions, in which we admire, first of all, the sureness of the hand which seems to have drawn them by way of amusement, have been patiently wrought, conscientiously studied. The costumes are those of Pont l'Évêque; the houses, the landscapes, are those of the little town and of the Norman district where the action unfolds itself. This terrace, strewn with fallen leaves, in which Madame Aubain is walking with her sick daughter, is really that of the Ursuline Convent at Honfleur. The painter paid a visit to the place in order to reproduce faithfully the panorama described by Flaubert with two strokes of the pen. "There is in the garden a terrace, which commands a view of the Seine. . . . Virginie watched the sails in the distance, and the entire horizon from the château of Tancarville to the lighthouses of Havre."

M. Émile Adan's water-colours figure, at the very moment when these lines appear, at the Exhibition of Water-colours; they are justly noticed and admired there. The duty of interpreting them by the engraver's art has been entrusted to M. Champollion, who has discharged it with superior talent, the extent of which he had already shown in the engraving of "Herodias." Before attaching his name to these two great works, "Herodias" and "A Simple Heart," M. Champollion was in the first rank of our engravers; henceforth he has no peer.

IV.

It required nothing less than exceptional pains to make the edition of "A Simple Heart" worthy to take rank with those of the two other "Tales" of Flaubert,—a result which we owe to the intelligent and daring initiative of M. Ferroud.

"Herodias" appeared in November, 1892, adorned with compositions planned with masterly skill, learned and dazzling, by M. G. Rochegrosse. The eulogium of this work has no longer to be pronounced; it has a definite rank in the esteem of bibliophiles, and on the shelves in which the most

refined of them place the volumes which they regard as the most precious of their "cabinets." The engravings are, in their slender framework, incomparable for grandeur and power. The sun of the East illumines them. Rochegrosse has vied in erudition, in style, in colour, with Flaubert himself.

"The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitable" has not yet been published; but it is known already that the illustrations will bear the signatures of M. Luc. Olivier Merson,—another painter of very great celebrity. I have been permitted to see several of his compositions, and I can say that they realise all the hopes warranted by the choice of such an artist for such subjects. Flaubert, that lover of local colour and truth, declared himself satisfied. The mysticism of Luc. Olivier Merson is real in the same way that the East is real,—in the same way that M. Émile Adan's rustic scenes and interiors are real.

The wishes of Flaubert will be again gratified from another point of view. His three "Tales," as I have said above, now form a whole connected together by an artistic harmony, just as they form a whole connected together by a literary harmony. Each is decorated in the style appropriate to it;

but one bond unites them. The three volumes are of the same size, and that size is perfect, neither too large nor too small. They have been printed by M. Chamerot, with the same characters and the same care, on the same excellent paper. All three have been "made up" according to the same rules, with the same taste, the same knowledge of details, the same vigilant attention. The etching process has been employed to illustrate the three of them. That process is the oldest of all; it is, and it will remain, the best. We feel conscious that a common direction has presided over the entire work while employing the coöperation of artists whose talents were as varying as the subjects of the "Tales."

Here I reach the portion of the undertaking which belongs to M. Ferroud. He conceived the plan of it, and then executed it with rare felicity, — it should be added, with rare courage. This is simply the right word to use, nothing more. Nobody can be ignorant of the fact that a crisis has a cruel effect on artistic publications, just as it has on the book trade in general. Every day we learn that editions, whose net cost has been considerable, have been "liquidated." (What a nasty

expression!) In this situation the timid pause, the boldest exercise restraint over themselves. Ferroud said to himself, on the contrary, "Since it has become a bad business to spend a little money in bringing out beautiful books, I will set to work in a different fashion ; I will spend a great deal of money, and I will bring out books which will be more than beautiful,— which will be very beautiful."

The programme, it may be seen, consisted, on the one hand, in making sacrifices and running risks ; on the other hand, in making these sacrifices under the most profitable conditions and in getting good fortune on his side. It was not enough to dare ; it was necessary to know how to dare at the opportune moment. The difficulty was not to bring himself in contact with distinguished artists ; the main point was to discern amongst those artists the one who would best fulfil the task confided to him. To choose the fitting person for a task seems, at first sight, the simplest thing in the world, and yet experience proves that it is the most difficult. After the event it appears quite natural that Rochegrosse should have been entrusted with the illustration of "Herodias," Émile Adan with that of "A Simple Heart," Luc. Olivier

Merson with that of "The Legend of Saint Julian," Lalauze and Paul Avril with such or such other publications. Were not these artists indicated by the nature of their talents? That is unquestionable; still, it was necessary to take thought, and each time to knock at the right door, and never mistake the address. M. Ferroud made no mistake on this point. This is what has led to his success; this is what has also led to the success of his publications being a sterling success, which is not a transitory infatuation, but which will last because it is deserved.

May I be allowed to quote myself? I remember having written, after the appearance of "Herodias," that, if M. Ferroud came to publish the two other "Tales" under similar conditions, his name, preserved by such works, would live as long as the taste for beautiful books would continue in the memory of grateful bibliophiles.¹

After the publication of "A Simple Heart," the game was two-thirds won; and now it is a matter of certainty that it would be completely won with the publication of "The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitable."

A. DE CLAYE (D'EYLAC).

¹ "La Bibliophilie," 1891-92, p. 66.



CHAPTER I.

FOR half a century every matron in Pont l'Évêque had envied Madame Aubain her servant Félicité.

For a hundred francs a year she did the cooking and the housekeeping, sewed, washed, and ironed; she knew how to bridle a horse, to fatten poultry, and to churn milk; and she remained devoted to her mistress, who, nevertheless, was not a very agreeable lady.

She had married a dissipated fellow without any property, who died in the early part of 1809, leaving her with two very young children and a heap of debts. Then she sold her estate, with the exception of the Toucques farm and the Geffosses farm, from which she derived an income of five thousand francs a year at most; and she gave up her house at Saint Melaine to live in another not so costly, which had belonged to her ancestors, and which was situated at the rear of the market-place.

This house, which was slated, stood between a thoroughfare and a lane leading towards the river. The unevenness of its interior made people stumble. A narrow vestibule separated the kitchen from the dining-room, in which Madame Aubain remained seated all day long near the window, in a straw armchair. Eight mahogany chairs were ranged along the white panelling. Underneath a barom-



Chapman sculp.

eter lay a heap of boxes and cardboard cases, like a pyramid, on the top of an old piano. Two upholstered easy chairs flanked the yellow marble chimneypiece, which was in the style of Louis XV. The timepiece, in the centre, represented a temple of Vesta; and the entire apartment had a rather mouldy smell, for the floor was on a lower level than the garden.

On the first floor was "Madame's" own apartment, very spacious, hung with pale flowered paper, and containing the portrait of her late husband in the costume of a dandy. It communicated with a smaller room, in which might be seen two children's bedsteads without mattresses. Then came the drawing-room, always closed up, and filled with furniture covered over with cloth. After this, there was a corridor leading towards a study. Volumes and old papers garnished the shelves of a bookcase, which with its three sides enclosed a large bureau of black wood. The two return-panels were hidden under sketches made with the pen, landscapes in water body colour and engravings by Audran, souvenirs of better times and of vanished luxury. A skylight on the second floor allowed the sun's rays

to penetrate into Félicité's bedroom, which commanded a view of the meadows.

She got up at daybreak in order not to lose mass, and worked uninterruptedly till evening. Then, when the dinner was over, when the plates and dishes were in order, and when the door was securely fastened, she thrust the log under the ashes, and went to sleep before the fire with her beads in her hands.

Nobody could be more obstinate than she was in making a bargain. As for cleanliness, the shine of her saucepans was the despair of other servants. For the sake of economy, she used to eat slowly and used to gather up on the table with her fingers the crumbs that fell from her loaf — a twelve-pound loaf, which was baked expressly for herself, and which lasted twenty days.

In all seasons she wore a print handkerchief fastened behind by a pin, a cap which covered her hair, gray stockings, a red petticoat, and over her inside vest a slabbering-apron, like those worn by hospital nurses.

Her face was thin and her voice sharp. At twenty-five, people made her out to be forty. At fifty, she no longer showed any particular



age; and, always silent, with her rigid figure and her cautious movements, she seemed a woman made of wood, performing her functions automatically.





CHAPTER II.

SHE had her love story,
like other women.

Her father, a mason, had been killed by falling
from a scaffolding ; then her mother died, and her

sisters were scattered here and there. A farmer picked her up, and employed her, while still a little girl, in minding cows in the fields. She used to shiver under her rags, and drink water out of the ponds on an empty stomach ; she was beaten for nothing at all, and finally was dismissed for a theft of thirty sovereigns, which she had not committed. She went to another farmhouse, where she was taken as a poultry-maid ; and as her master and mistress were pleased with her, her fellow servants became jealous of her.

One evening in the month of August (she was then eighteen years old) they brought her to the public gathering at Colleville. She was at once stunned, stupefied by the racket of the fiddlers, the lamps that hung from the trees, the medley of costumes, the lace, the gold crosses, and the crowd of people all skipping along at the same time. She was standing modestly by herself when a young man of substantial aspect, who was smoking his pipe with his elbows on the pole attached to a hamper, came and asked her to dance with him. He ordered cider, coffee, and cakes for her, bought her a silk handkerchief, and, fancying that she understood what he meant, offered to see her

home. On the edge of a field of oats, he brutally threw her down. She was frightened, and began to scream, when he took himself off.

Another evening, on the Beaumont Road, she was trying to get past a big cart of hay, which was slowly moving in her direction, when, as the wheels just grazed her, she recognised Théodore.

He came up to her in a quiet sort of way, saying that she should forgive him for everything, as it was all "the fault of the drink." She did not know what answer to make to him, and felt a longing to run away.

He directly began to talk about the crops and the principal inhabitants of the parish, for his father had left Colleville for the farm of Écots, so that now they were neighbours.

"Ah!" said she.

He added that they wanted to get him settled in life. However, he was not in a hurry, and was waiting for a wife to his own liking. She hung down her head. Then he asked her if she had ever thought about getting married. She replied with a smile that it was a shame for him to be laughing at her.

"No, indeed, I give you my oath!" and he put



his left arm round her waist. She walked by his side supported by his clasp. They slackened their pace. The wind blew softly; the stars shone out; the huge cartload of hay was swaying to and fro in front of them; and the four horses, dragging their steps, raised up a cloud of dust. Then, without any directions, they turned to the right. He kissed her once more, and she vanished into the darkness.

In the following week Théodore got her to make appointments with him.

They met at the lower end of the farmyard, behind a wall, under a solitary tree. She was not innocent in the way that young ladies are — the animals had enlightened her — but reason and virtuous instincts kept her from falling. This resistance only intensified Théodore's passion to such an extent that, in order to gratify it (or perhaps in all sincerity), he offered to marry her. She was doubtful as to whether he really meant it. He assured her with great oaths that he did.

He soon confessed something of an unpleasant description. The year before his parents had bought a substitute for him in the conscription, but he might be called out any day, and the idea

of having to serve terrified him. To Félicité, this cowardice seemed a proof of his attachment to her, and she accordingly became more attached to him than ever. She stole out at night; and, when she came to keep her appointment, Théodore persecuted her with his restlessness and his persistence.

At last, he announced his intention of going himself to the prefect's office to make inquiries with a view to marriage, and said he would come to tell her the result on the following Sunday between eleven o'clock and midnight. When the time came, she hurried to meet her lover. In place of him she found a friend of his, who told her that she would see him no more. To secure himself against the necessity of going out as a conscript, Théodore had married a wealthy old woman, Madame Lehoussais, of Touques.

This was a crushing blow to her. She flung herself on the ground, uttered frenzied cries, called on God to help her, and remained in a field sobbing and groaning till daybreak. Then she returned to the farmhouse, gave notice that she was leaving, and at the end of the month, having been paid whatever was due to her, she tied up

her scanty baggage in a handkerchief, and started for Pont l'Évêque.

In front of the inn, she asked a well-dressed woman wearing a widow's head-dress if she wanted a servant, and found that the lady was just in search of a cook. The young woman did not know very much, but appeared to be so willing and so free from unreasonableness that Madame Aubain ended the interview by saying:

"All right; I will take you!" A quarter of an hour afterwards, Félicité was installed in the lady's house.

At first, she lived there in a sort of trepidation caused by "the kind of house" it was and the memory of "the master" hovering over everything. Paul and Virginie, the one seven years old, the other scarcely four, seemed to her formed of precious material. She carried them on her back like a horse; and Madame Aubain forbade her to be kissing them every minute, which mortified her. However, she felt happy. The peacefulness of her surroundings had melted away her grief.

Every Thursday, some guests came to play a game of boston. Félicité used to get the cards and the foot-warmers ready beforehand. They arrived

punctually at eight o'clock, and left before it struck eleven.

Every Monday morning the dealer in second-hand goods, who lived up the lane, exposed his wares to view on the ground. Then the town was filled with a confused murmur of sounds in which the neighing of horses, the bleating of lambs, the grunting of pigs, together with the grating noise of carts rumbling along the street, were intermingled. About midday, when the market was at its height, there appeared on the threshold a very tall old peasant with his cap on the back of his head, and a hooked nose, who was no other than Robelin, the man who farmed the Geffosses. Soon after came Liébard, who cultivated the Toucques farm, a little red-faced, fat man, in a gray vest and leggings equipped with spurs.

They both made presents of hens and cheese to their landlady. Félicité invariably baffled their wiles; and they went away filled with respect for her.

The Marquis de Gremanville, an uncle of Madame Aubain, who had ruined himself by debauchery, and who now resided at Falaise on the last bit left of his lands, used to pay her irreg-



ular visits. He always presented himself at lunch-time, with a hideous-looking poodle whose paws soiled all the furniture. In spite of his efforts to appear a gentleman, which he carried so far as to raise his hat whenever he said, "My late father," the force of habit made him pour out glass after glass, which he drank without stopping, and indulge at the same time in lascivious talk. Félicité would push him out politely: "You've had enough, Monsieur de Gremanville! Another time!" And she would shut the door on him.

She opened it freely to M. Bourais, a retired advocate. His white cravat and his bald head, his shirt-frill, his ample brown frock coat, the way he had of rounding his arm when taking a pinch of snuff, his entire personality, generated in her mind that confusion into which we are thrown by the sight of extraordinary men.

When he was looking after the management of "Madame's" property, he would shut himself up with her for hours in "the master's" study; and he was always afraid of doing anything that might compromise him, had an infinite respect for the magistracy, and even pretended to be a good Latin scholar.

In order to instruct the children in an agreeable fashion, he made them a present of a geography with prints. They were representations of different scenes in the world — cannibals wearing feathers on their heads, an ape carrying off a young lady, Bedouins in the desert, a whale which was just being harpooned, etc.

Paul explained these engravings to Félicité. This, indeed, was her entire literary education.

That of the children was entrusted to Guyot, a poor wretch employed at the Mayor's office, who was celebrated for the fine hand he wrote, and who had a habit of sharpening his penknife on his boot.

When the weather was fine, they would start at an early hour for the Geffosses.

The farm was on a slope, and the house in the centre; and in the distance the sea appeared, like a patch of gray.

Félicité drew forth from her basket slices of cold meat, and they would enjoy their morning meal in an apartment adjoining the dairy. It was all that remained of an old villa which had now disappeared. The paper, which hung in shreds from the wall, shook with every current of air. Madame Aubain, overwhelmed with recollections of

the past, would let her head sink on her breast. The children no longer dared to open their lips.

"Oh! go and play!" she would say to them, and off they would scamper.

Paul climbed up to the top of the barn, snared birds, made ducks and drakes on the pond, or kept beating with a stick the thick casks, which resounded like drums.

Virginie fed the rabbits, darted forward to gather bluebottles, and the rapid movements of her legs allowed her little embroidered drawers to be seen.

One evening in autumn, they were making their way home through the grass.

The moon, in its first quarter, had lighted up one portion of the sky; and a fog floated like a scarf over the winding surface of the Touques. Oxen, stretched in the middle of the green sward, gazed tranquilly at these four persons passing by. In the third pasture-field, some of them rose up, and then stood in a ring in front of the four pedestrians.

"Don't be a bit afraid!" said Félicité; and, with a kind of melancholy murmur, she stroked the back of the animal who was nearest to her.

He turned his head; the others followed his

example. But, when they had passed through the next strip of pasture; their ears were greeted with a fearful bellowing. It was a bull, who had till now been hidden from view by the haze. He advanced towards the two women. Madame Aubain began to run.

“No ! no ! not so quick !”

However, they hurried forward more rapidly, and could hear behind them a loud puff, which every moment was drawing nearer to them. The wooden shoes which they wore beat on the grass of the meadow like hammers ; and now the beast was actually galloping ! Félicité turned round and snatched up clumps of clay, which she flung into his eyes. He lowered his muzzle, shook his horns, and quivered with rage, bellowing horribly.

Madame Aubain, at the very end of the field, with her two children, was desperately trying to get over the top of the fence. Félicité kept constantly retreating with her eyes on the bull, and, without stopping, flung clods of grass which blinded him, while she exclaimed : “Hurry off with you ! Hurry off with you !”

Madame Aubain got over the fence, pushed forward Virginie, and then Paul fell several times



while trying to climb the slopes, and by dint of sheer courage succeeded in doing so.

The bull had jammed Félicité up against a barred fence; his foam was spouting out on her face; a second more and he would have disembowelled her. She had just time to slip out between two of the bars, and the huge beast stopped short in surprise.

For many years this occurrence formed the subject of conversation at Pont l'Évêque. Félicité took no pride in it, not even suspecting that she had done anything heroic.

She was entirely concerned about Virginie's health, for the little girl had, in consequence of her fright, got a nervous affection, and M. Poupart, the medical man who attended her, prescribed for her the sea baths of Trouville.

At this period they were not much patronised. Madame Aubain made inquiries, consulted Bourais, and made preparations as if for a long journey.

Her luggage left the night before in Liébard's cart. Next morning he brought two horses, one of which had a woman's saddle, supported by a velvet back, and on the crupper of the second a cloak rolled up formed a kind of seat. Madame Aubain

mounted on it behind him. Félicité took charge of Virginie, and Paul bestrode M. Lechaptois's donkey, which had been lent on the condition that the greatest care would be taken of it.

The road was so bad that it took two hours to get over its eight kilometres.¹ The horses sank in mire up to their pasterns, and in order to extricate themselves made abrupt movements with their haunches, or else they stumbled against the ruts; at other times they were forced to jump. Liébard's mare stopped suddenly at certain points. He waited patiently till she resumed her progress; and he began talking about certain ladies whose estates were close to the roadside, adding to the stories which he told about them certain moral reflections. Thus, about the middle of the Toucques, as they passed beneath windows surrounded by nasturtiums, he said, with a shrug of his shoulders:

“There's the house of a Madame Lehoussais, who, in place of getting a young man — ”

Félicité did not hear the rest; the horses broke into a trot, the ass began galloping; they all proceeded in single file along a narrow track. A stile turned; two boys made their appearance; and

¹ Nearly five miles.

they descended in front of the puddle of liquid manure at the very threshold of the door.

Mère Liébard, on seeing her mistress, made abundant demonstrations of joy. She served up for them a luncheon, consisting of a sirloin of beef, tripes, pudding, a chicken fricasee, a tart with stewed fruit and plums with brandy, accompanying all this good cheer with polite remarks to the effect that "Madame looked in better health;" that "Mademoiselle had got to be a splendid girl," and that "M. Paul had stretched wonderfully," without forgetting to refer to their deceased grandparents, whom the Liébards had known, having been in the service of the family for many generations.

The farmhouse had, like themselves, an old-fashioned aspect. The rafters were worm-eaten, the walls blackened with smoke, the windows clouded with dust. An oaken dresser was covered with utensils of every sort—jugs, plates, tin porringers, snares for wolves, sheep-hooks; an enormous syringe made the children burst out laughing. There was not a tree in the three enclosures of the farm that had not toadstools at its base, or a tuft of mistletoe in its branches. The wind had knocked down many of them. They had

taken root again in the place where they had fallen, and were now all bending under the load of fruitage that had sprouted from them. The straw roofs, resembling brown velvet and of unequal thickness, resisted the most violent squalls. The stabling portion of the farm premises had, however, fallen into a state of decay. Madame Aubain said that she would look after it, and then gave orders to have the animals reharnessed.

It took them another half-hour to reach Trouville. The little group of riders alighted to pass the *Écores*. This was a cliff overhanging a number of boats; and, three minutes afterwards, at the end of the quay, they entered the courtyard of "The Golden Lamb," kept by Mère David.

Virginie, after the first few days, felt less weak, owing to the change of air and the effect of the baths. She took them in her chemise, for want of a bathing costume, and her nurse dressed her in a tidewaiter's hut which was used by the bathers.

In the afternoon, they went off with the donkey beyond the Roches Noires to the side of Hennequeville. The path first ascended between stretches of ground dotted with level green patches resembling the grass-plots of a park, then led to a

wide plain in which pasture-lands alternated with ploughed fields. At the edge of the road, amid a tangle of briars, stood a row of holly-trees; here and there, a large dead tree formed zigzags with its branches in the clear air far above.

Almost invariably they lay down to rest themselves in a meadow with Deauville at their left, Havre at their right, and the open sea in front of them. It sparkled in the sunlight, smooth as a mirror, so calm that its murmur could scarcely be heard. Sparrows hidden from view were chirping; and over all things spread the vast canopy of heaven.

Madame Aubain sat down, and began to do some sewing work; Virginie, at her side, plaited rushes; Felicité went weeding lavender-flowers; Paul, who was getting bored, wanted to go back home.

At other times, having crossed the Touques in a boat, they went searching for shells. The tide being at low water, they were able to distinguish sea-urchins, whiting-pouts, and medusæ; and the children ran to catch at the flakes of foam which were carried along by the wind. The sleepy waves, falling over the shingle, rolled slowly along the strand, which stretched out further than the eye could see, but was hemmed

in on the land side by the downs, which separated it from the *Marais*, a wide meadow shaped like a hippodrome. When they came back the same way, they saw Trouville, down below on the slope of the hill, growing larger with every step they took, and seeming, with its houses all of unequal size, to be budding forth in a kind of gay disorder.

When the days were too hot, they did not leave their lodgings. The dazzling brightness from without made bars of light between the blades of the Venetian blinds. Not a sound in the village. Below, on the footpath, not a single soul. The surrounding silence imparted to everything a character of intensified quietude. In the distance calkers' hammers were driving plugs into the keels of vessels; and the smell of tar was borne on the lingering breeze.

The principal source of amusement was the return of the fishing-boats. As soon as they passed the beacons, they began to tack about. Their sails ran down over two-thirds of their masts, and, with their foresails swollen out like balloons, they advanced, gliding through the ripples of the waves into the middle of the harbour, where all of a sudden the anchor would be

dropped. Then, as each vessel came in, it took its place close to the quay. The men on board flung the palpitating fishes over the planks; a row of carts was in attendance on them, and women in cotton caps rushed forward to take the baskets and to kiss their husbands.

One day, a woman of this class accosted Félicité, who, a little while afterwards, came into the apartment they occupied, filled with delight. She had come across a sister of hers; and Nastasie Barette, the wife of a man named Leroux, appeared with a suckling infant at her breast, another child at her right-hand side, and at her left a little cabin-boy with arms akimbo and a sailor's cap over his ears.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, Madame Aubain got rid of her.

After this, they met the woman and her children every day either on the kitchen landing or in their walks. The husband never showed himself.

Félicité got very fond of them. She bought counterpanes, shirts, and chemises, and a stove for them. They were evidently only making use of her. This weakness on her part irritated Madame Aubain, who, moreover, did not like the nephew's familiarities, for he "thee'd" and "thou'd" her

son; and, as Virginie had a cough, and the season had not improved, she returned to Pont l'Évêque.

M. Bourais enlightened her as to the choice of a college. The one at Caen was considered the best. Paul was sent there; and he manfully bade farewell to those at home, pleased with the notion of living in a school where he would have companions.

Madame Aubain submitted to this parting with her son, because it was indispensable. Virginie gradually had him less in her thoughts. Félicité regretted the racket he used to make. But she

found another occupation to divert her attention. As soon as Christmas came round she commenced bringing the little girl every day to catechism.





CHAPTER III.

HAVING made a genu-
flection at the church door,
she advanced under the lofty nave between the

two lines of seats, opened Madame Aubain's pew, sat down, and cast a glance around her.

The boys at the right, the girls at the left, filled up the stalls of the choir; the curé remained standing beside the reading-desk. On a stained-glass window in the apse the Holy Ghost was looking down on the Virgin; another exhibited her kneeling before the Infant Jesus; and behind the tabernacle a group carved in wood represented Saint Michael dashing the dragon to the earth.

The priest began with an abridgment of Sacred History. She imagined that she saw Paradise, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, cities all in flames, whole peoples perishing, and idols cast down; and from the dazzling effect of all these impressions she cherished a sense of awe with regard to the Most High, and a dread of His wrath. Then, when she heard the story of the Passion, she shed tears. Why had they crucified Him, who loved children, fed the multitude, healed the blind, and was pleased, on account of His gentleness, to be born in the midst of the poor on the dunghill of a stable? The seed-times, the harvests, the wine-press, all these familiar things of which the Gospel speaks, were found in His life. The passing of

God had sanctified them; and she loved the lambs more tenderly on account of the Lamb of God, and the doves on account of the Holy Ghost.

She found it hard to form an idea of His person; for He was not merely a bird, but in addition a fire and at other times a breath. It was His light perhaps that hovered at night-time round the borders of marshes, His breathing that drove on the clouds, His voice that made the bells harmonious; and she remained full of adoration, enjoying the coolness of the walls and the tranquillity of the church.

As for dogmas, she knew nothing whatever about them, and did not even try to understand them. The curé discoursed; the children recited; she ended by going to sleep, and suddenly woke up when their wooden shoes began clattering over the stone floor as they hurried out.

It was in this way, simply by listening, that she learned the catechism, her religious education having been neglected in her youth; and thenceforth she imitated all the practices of Virginie, fasted like her, and went to confession along with her. On Corpus Christi they made a visit together to a processional altar.

The first communion tormented her beforehand.

She got into a state of excitement about the shoes, about the beads, about the prayer-book, about the gloves. With what a tremor she assisted Virginie's mother to dress her !

During the entire mass, she was in a state of agonising restlessness. M. Bourais hid one side of the choir from her ; but right in front of her the flock of virgins with their white crowns over their falling veils formed, as it were, a field of snow ; and she recognised at a distance the dear little thing with her neck prettier than the rest, and her collected attitude. The bell rang. The heads were bent ; there was a great silence. To the roar of the organ the chanters and the choral throng intoned the "Agnus Dei ;" then the boys began to step forward one by one, and after them the girls rose up. Step by step, with joined hands, they proceeded towards the altar, which was all illuminated, knelt down on the first step, received the consecrated wafer one by one, and in the same order returned each to her *prie-Dieu*. When Virginie's turn came, Félicité leaned forward to see her ; and, with that imaginativeness which springs from genuine tenderness of heart, she fancied that she was herself this little girl ; the face of Virginie

became her own; the child's frock was drawn over herself, and Virginie's heart was beating in her own breast. At the moment when the little girl opened her mouth and closed her eyes she felt ready to swoon away.

Next morning, at an early hour, she presented herself at the sacristy, in order that the curé might give her communion. She received it devoutly, but did not taste the same rapture.

Madame Aubain was anxious to make her daughter an accomplished young lady; and, as Guyot was unable to teach her either English or music, she resolved to place her at the Ursuline nuns' boarding-school at Honfleur.

The child made no objection. Félicité sighed, thinking that "Madame" showed a want of feeling. Then she reflected that perhaps her mistress was in the right. These things passed her comprehension.

One day an old tilted wagon drew up before the door, and out of it stepped a nun, who had come for mademoiselle. Félicité put the luggage on the roof of the wagon, gave some directions to the driver, and put into the trunk six pots of jam and a dozen pears, together with a bunch of violets.

Virginie, at the last moment, was seized with a great fit of sobbing. She embraced her mother, who kissed her on the forehead, repeating: "Come! courage! courage!"

The step of the vehicle was turned up, and they started on their journey. Then Madame Aubain had a fainting fit; and that evening all her friends — the Lormeau family, Madame Lechaptois, those young ladies the Rochefeuilles, M. de Houpeville, and Bourais — presented themselves for the purpose of consoling her.

The loss of her daughter's society was in the beginning very painful to her. But she received a letter from the little girl three times a week, wrote to her in the intervening days, walked about in the garden, read a little, and in this way managed to fill up the gap that had been made in her daily life.

In the morning, through force of habit, Félicité entered Virginie's room, and stared at the walls. She felt pained at the thought of not having any longer to comb the child's hair, to lace her boots, to tuck up the bedclothes around her, and at no longer seeing her pretty face, at no longer holding her by the hand when they went out together. To



occupy her idle time, she tried to do lace-work. Her fingers were too clumsy, and they broke the threads; she could not understand anything; she lost her sleep; and, to use her own phrase, she was "worn out." In order to find something "to divert her," she asked permission to let her nephew Victor come to see her.

He arrived on Sunday after mass, with red cheeks and bare chest, and exhaling the odour of the fields through which he had been tramping. She at once laid the table for him. They sat facing one another during the meal; and, while she ate as little as possible to save expense, she stuffed him so much with food that he ended by going to sleep. At the first stroke of the bell for vespers, she woke him up, brushed his trousers, knotted his necktie, and made her way to the church, leaning on his arm with maternal tenderness.

His parents gave him directions always to carry away from her something or other — a package of soft sugar, or soap, or brandy, or, now and then, even some money. He used to bring her his old clothes to mend, and she gladly performed this task, as it furnished an excuse for his having to come back again.

In the month of August, his father brought him on a cruise round the coast.

It was in vacation time, and it consoled her to have the children back home again. But Paul had become capricious, and Virginie was no longer at an age when she could be "thee'd" and "thou'd," which placed a certain constraint, a kind of barrier, between them.

Victor went successively to Morlaix, to Dunkirk, and to Brighton. On his return from each voyage, he made her a present. On the first occasion, it was a box made of shell-work; on the second, a coffee-cup; and, on the third, a big gingerbread man. The lad had grown handsome, had a good figure, a slight moustache, good honest eyes, and a little glazed hat, which he wore on the back of his head like a pilot. He used to amuse her by telling her yarns full of nautical phrases.

One Monday — it was the 14th of July, 1819 (she did not forget the date) — Victor announced that he had entered into an agreement to go on a long voyage, and that, two days later, he would be starting by the packet-boat from Honfleur to join his schooner, which would be sailing from Havre



in a very short time. He would be away, perhaps, two years.

The prospect of such a long absence grieved Félicité very much; and in order to say good-bye to him again, on Wednesday evening, after her mistress had dined, she put on her galoshes, and hurried over the four leagues that separated Pont l'Évêque from Honfleur.

When she was in front of the Crucifix on the road, in place of turning to the left, she took the road to the right, got lost in wood-yards, and then retraced her steps; people whom she approached to make inquiries from told her to hurry on. She walked around the dock filled with ships, and knocked against cables; then the ground seemed to give way, lights flashed across one another; and she imagined that she must be mad when she saw horses in the sky above her.

On the edge of the quay, others were neighing, terrified at the sea. A derrick and tackle, by which they were being hoisted on board, let them down into a vessel, where some passengers were jostling against each other in the midst of barrels of cider, hampers of cheese, and sacks of corn. One could hear the clucking of hens; the captain swore

roundly ; and a cabin-boy remained leaning on his elbows at the cat-head, indifferent to all these things. Félicité, who had not previously recognised him, exclaimed : "Victor!" He raised his head. She was springing towards him when suddenly the gangplank was drawn away.

The packet-boat, on board which some of the hands were hauling with a "heave ho!" was starting out of the harbour. Its timbers were creaking; the heavy waves lashed its prow. The sails were turned; no one could be seen on board any longer; and on the sea silvered by the moon, the vessel made a black spot, which gradually grew paler, till it faded in the distance and disappeared.

Félicité, as she passed near the Crucifix on the road, felt a desire to recommend to God's protection him whom she cherished most; and she remained for a long time praying there, her face bathed in tears, and her eyes turned towards the clouds. The town was sleeping; tidewaiters were walking about; and water was falling continually through the holes of the flood-gate with the noise of a torrent. It struck two o'clock.

The parlour would not be opened before day-break. Any delay would be sure to annoy "Ma-

dame;" and in spite of her desire to embrace the other child she returned home. The maids of the inn were just waking up as she entered Pont l'Évêque.

So then the poor lad would be for months rolling over the waves. His previous voyages had not frightened him. People came back from England and from Brittany; but America, the Colonies, the West Indian Islands, were lost in an undefined region at the other end of the world!

From that time forth Félicité thought exclusively about her nephew. On sunny days she tormented herself about his thirst; when there was a storm she was afraid that he might be struck by lightning. When she heard the wind roaring down the chimney and carrying off slates, she saw him stricken by that very tempest, on the top of a shattered mast, his entire body flung back by a splashing mass of foam; or else — recollections of the geography with prints — he was being devoured by savages, caught by apes in a wood, or dying on some desolate seashore. And she never spoke about her anxieties.

Madame Aubain had some herself on account of her daughter.

The good sisters found that she was of an affectionate disposition, but delicately organised. The slightest excitement unnerved her. The piano had to be given up. Her mother required to have letters sent periodically to her from the convent. One morning, when the postman left no letter, she got impatient, and she kept walking up and down the parlour from her armchair to the window. It was really extraordinary! No news these four days!

In order that her mistress might be consoled by her own example, Félicité said to her:

“Look at me, madame, six months without getting any news —”

“About whom, pray?”

The servant replied in a meek tone:

“Why — about my nephew!”

“Ah! your nephew!” and, with a shrug of the shoulders, Madame Aubain resumed her walk up and down the room, as much as to say: “I was not bestowing a thought on that subject! Besides, what do I care about him? A cabin-boy, a beggar — a matter of great consequence, indeed! whereas my daughter — just imagine!”

Félicité, though brought up amid hard surround-

ings, felt indignant at her mistress's haughty tone ; then she let the matter slip out of her memory.

To her it seemed quite natural to lose one's head on account of the little girl.

Both children possessed for her equal importance. One bond linked them to her heart, and it seemed natural that their destinies should be the same.

The apothecary informed her that Victor's vessel had arrived in Havana. He had read this intelligence in a newspaper.

Owing to its association with cigars, she imagined that Havana was a country in which people did nothing but smoke, and she pictured to herself Victor walking about in the midst of negroes in a cloud of tobacco smoke. Could one "in case of necessity" return home from it by land ? What distance was it from Pont l'Évêque ? In order to find out this, she questioned M. Bourais.

He got his atlas, then began to explain the different longitudes ; and his face wore the self-complacent smile of a vulgar pedant at the sight of Félicité's perplexity. At last, with his pencil-case, he indicated an almost imperceptible black point in the intersecting lines of an oval patch, adding, "Here it is."

She bent over the map. This network of coloured lines fatigued her eyes without giving her any information; and Bourais having urged her to tell him what was the cause of her embarrassment, she begged of him to show her the house where Victor lived. Bourais lifted up his hands; he sneezed, then laughed prodigiously. Such a display of simplicity excited his mirth, and Félicité could not understand the cause of it—she who had perhaps expected to see her nephew's portrait, so limited was her intelligence!

A fortnight later, Liébard, at market-time, as usual, came into the kitchen and gave her a letter sent by her brother-in-law. As neither of them knew how to read, she had recourse to her mistress.

Madame Aubain, who had been counting the stitches in a knitted vest, laid it down beside her, broke the seal of the letter, and in a low tone, with a look of deep compassion, read:

“It is a misfortune that this brings news to you about. Your nephew—”

He was dead. That was all the letter said about him.

Félicité sank on a chair, leaning her head against the partition, and closed her eyelids, which

had become suddenly red. Then, with her face drooping, her hands hanging limp by her sides, and a fixed stare in her eyes, she kept repeating at intervals :

“ Poor little chap ! poor little chap ! ”

Liébard, as he gazed at her, gave a deep sigh. Madame Aubain trembled a little. She suggested that Félicité should go and see her sister at Trouville. The servant indicated by a gesture in reply that she did not want to go.

Then there was silence. The worthy Liébard thought he had better take his leave.

When he had gone, she said :

“ It matters nothing to them ! ” Her head fell back, and in a mechanical fashion she lifted up from time to time the long needles on the work-table.

Women were passing into the courtyard with a basket of freshly washed linen, from which the water was trickling.

As she looked at them through the window-panes, she thought about her own washing. Having scalded it the night before, it was necessary to-day to rinse it, and she went out of the room.

Her board and her tub were on the bank of the

Toucques. She flung out on the river's edge a heap of shirts, tucked up her sleeves, and seized her beetle; and the vigorous blows she gave with it to the linen were heard in the adjoining gardens. The meadows had a desolate look; the wind set the river in motion; at the bottom of it, tall weeds were bending like the hair of corpses floating in the water. She restrained her grief, and until nightfall kept up bravely; but when she was alone in her own room, she gave herself up to it freely, lying flat on her mattress, with her face on the pillow, and her two hands pressed against her temples.

Some time afterwards, she learned through Victor's own captain the circumstances connected with his death. He had been too much bled for yellow fever at the hospital. Four doctors had been operating on him at the same time. He died immediately, and the principal doctor said:

“Good! one more!”

His parents had always treated him barbarously. She preferred not to see them again; and they made no advances towards her, either through forgetfulness or the callousness of miserable people.

Virginie's health had got worse. An oppression

in the chest, coughing, perpetual feverishness, and hectic flush on her cheeks, disclosed some deep-rooted weakness in her constitution. M. Poupart had advised that she should go and live for a time in Provence. Madame Aubain made up her mind about the matter, and would have brought her daughter home at once, were it not for the climate of Pont l'Évêque.

She made an arrangement with a man who hired out vehicles to drive her to the convent every Tuesday. There was a terrace in the garden from which one could see the Seine. Virginie used to walk there, leaning on her arm, over the fallen vine-leaves. Sometimes the sunlight, passing across the clouds, forced her to shut her eyelids, while she watched the sails in the distance and the entire horizon from the château of Tancarville to the lighthouses of Havre. After this, they would take a rest in the harbour. Her mother had procured a little cask of Malaga wine; and, laughing at the idea, she would take two sips of it, and no more.

Her strength was somewhat restored. The autumn slipped by pleasantly. Félicité reassured Madame Aubain. But, one evening, when she

had made an excursion to the neighbourhood of the convent, she saw M. Poupart's carriage before the door, and he was in the vestibule. Madame Aubain was tying her bonnet.

"Give me my foot-warmer, my purse, and my gloves — make haste!"

Virginie had inflammation of the lungs; perhaps it was a hopeless case.

"Not yet," said the physician, and the two of them jumped into the carriage under whirling flakes of snow. Night was falling, and it was intensely cold.

Félicité rushed to the church to light a wax taper. Then she ran after the vehicle, which she overtook about an hour later, sprang up lightly behind, and was holding on by the straps when suddenly the thought flashed across her mind: "The courtyard was not closed! suppose thieves got in." And she jumped down.

Next morning, at dawn, she presented herself at the doctor's house. He had returned home, but had gone away again to the country. Then she remained waiting at the inn, believing that some stranger might bring her a letter. Finally, shortly after sunrise, she took the diligence to Lisieux.



The convent was at the end of a steep lane. When she reached the middle of this lane, she heard strange sounds — a death-knell.

"It is for others," she thought; and Félicité gave a loud knock at the door.

Many minutes had elapsed when the trailing of house shoes reached her ears, and a nun appeared.

The good sister, with a sorrowful look in her face, said that "she had just passed away." At the same time, the death-bell of Saint Leonard rang out more loudly than before.

Félicité reached the second floor.

As she crossed the threshold of the apartment, her eyes fell on Virginie lying on her back with her hands joined together, her mouth open, and her head thrown back, with a black crucifix suspended immediately above it, between motionless curtains whiter than her face. Madame Aubain, at the foot of the bed, around which her arms were clasped, was convulsed with agonising sobs. The superioress was standing at the right-hand side. Three candlesticks placed on the chest of drawers threw a red glare around, and the windows were dimmed by the hazy

light. Some of the nuns took Madame Aubain away.

For two nights, Félicité did not leave the dead child's side. She kept repeating the same prayers, flung holy water over the bedclothes, then came and sat down again, fixing her gaze upon the corpse. At the end of the first night's watch, she remarked that the face had turned yellow, and the lips blue, that the nose had become pinched, and that the eyes had sunk in their sockets. She kissed them over and over again, and would not have felt very much astonished if Virginie had reopened them; for to such souls as hers the supernatural is quite simple. She dressed up the dead child, wrapped her in her shroud, put her into her coffin, laid a wreath on her, and spread out her hair. It was fair, and of extraordinary length for her age. Félicité cut off a long lock of it, half of which she slipped into her bosom, resolving never to part with it.

The body was brought back to Pont l'Évêque, in accordance with the wishes of Madame Aubain, who followed the hearse in a closed carriage.

After mass, it took three-quarters of an hour to reach the cemetery. Paul walked in front, sob-

bing. M. Bourais was close behind ; then came the principal inhabitants, the women with black mantles covering them all over, and last of all Félicité. She was thinking about her nephew, and the reflection that she had not been able to pay even this tribute of respect to him was an additional source of grief to her, as if he should have been buried along with the other.

Madame Aubain's despair knew no bounds.

At first, her soul rose up in revolt against God at what seemed to her His injustice in depriving her of her daughter, who had never done any evil, and whose conscience was so pure. But no ! she should have brought Virginie to the South. Other doctors might have saved her. She blamed herself, wanted to join her dead child, and had dreams in the middle of which she would break out into heartrending cries. One dream especially oppressed her. Her husband, in the dress of a sailor, had come back from a long voyage, and told her with tears in his eyes that he had got orders to take away Virginie. Then they put their heads together to try and find out a hiding-place somewhere.

One time, she went out into the garden in a

state of terrible agitation. A little while before (she pointed out the spot) the father and the daughter had appeared to her one after the other, and they did nothing but stare at her.

For many months she remained in her room, unable to stir. Félicité gave her a mild lecture: she should take care of herself for her son's sake, and for the other as well, to show that she remembered "her."

"Her," returned Madame Aubain, as if suddenly awakening. "Ah! yes! yes! You do not forget her"—an allusion to the cemetery, from which they had carefully kept her away.

Félicité used to go there every day. At four o'clock exactly she would pass by the sides of the houses, climb up the hill, open the gate, and make her way to Virginie's tomb. It was a little column of rose-coloured marble, with a flagstone at the base, and chains around enclosing a sort of little garden. The borders were hidden beneath a covering of flowers. She watered their leaves, scattered fresh sand, and knelt down to dress the soil more effectively.

When Madame Aubain was able to come there, she derived from it a certain relief, a kind of consolation.

Then years glided by, all alike, and without any episode save the return of the great festivals — Easter, the Assumption, All Saints' Day.

But occurrences within the house marked dates to which subsequently their attention was directed. Thus, in 1825, two glaziers whitewashed the vestibule; in 1827 a portion of the roof, falling into the courtyard, was near killing a man. In the summer of 1828, it was madame's turn to offer consecrated bread; about this very period Bourais mysteriously disappeared; and their former acquaintances gradually dropped off — Guyot, Liébard, Madame Lechaptois, Robelin, and Uncle Gremenville, who for a long time past had been paralysed.

One night, the driver of the mail-coach announced in Pont l'Évêque the outbreak of the Revolution of July. A few days afterwards, a new sub-prefect was nominated — the Baron de Larsonnière, ex-American consul, with whom resided, in addition to his wife, his sister-in-law, together with three young ladies already rather tall. They might be seen on their grass-plot arrayed in flowing blouses; they were the possessors of a negro and a parrot. Madame Aubain

had a visit from them, which she did not fail to return. Félicité, whenever they made their appearance a great distance off, used to run and inform her mistress of the fact. But only one thing now could arouse that lady's emotions — the letters that came from her son.

He was unable to follow any career, being entirely taken up with smoking-rooms. She paid his debts; he contracted fresh ones; and the sighs that Madame Aubain uttered, while she knitted beside the window, reached Félicité's ears while at her spinning-wheel in the kitchen.

They walked along the espalier, and kept always chatting about Virginie, asking themselves whether she would like such a thing, and what she would probably have said on such an occasion.

All the little things that had belonged to her filled a press in the wall of the double-bedded room. Madame Aubain inspected it as seldom as possible. One summer's day she overcame her repugnance, and looked into it, and moths flew out of the press.

Virginie's frocks were placed in a row under a shelf, on which there were three dolls, some hoops,

the furniture of a child's house, and the wash hand-basin which she had used. They took out in the same way the petticoats, the stockings, and the pocket-handkerchiefs, and spread them over the two beds, before folding them up again. The sunlight fell on these sorry objects, showing their stains and the creases that had been caused by the movements of the body. The air was warm; the sky was cloudless; a blackbird was twittering; all living things seemed bathed in an atmosphere of deep joy. They found a little hairy hat made of shag of a maroon colour, but it was all eaten away by vermin. Félicité asked leave to keep it herself. They looked wistfully into one another's eyes, while the tears freely gushed forth. At length, the mistress opened her arms; the servant fell upon her breast, and they clasped each other tightly, satisfying their grief in a kiss, which made them equals.

It was the first time in their lives that this had happened, Madame Aubain not being of a demonstrative nature. Félicité felt as grateful for this as if it had been a material benefit, and henceforth she loved her mistress with the devotedness of an animal and a sort of religious reverence. The

goodness of her heart found new ways of exhibiting itself.

When she heard the drums of a marching regiment in the street, she stood before the door with a jar of cider, and invited the soldiers to come and drink. She went to nurse persons attacked with cholera. She took the Poles under her protection, and there was even one of them who expressed a wish to marry her. But they got angry when, one morning, on coming back from the Angelus, she found him in the kitchen, into which he had effected an entrance, quietly swallowing some meat seasoned with vinegar, which he had cooked for himself.

After the Poles, it was Père Colmiche, an old man who was believed to have committed atrocities in 1793. He lived on the river's bank in the midst of the rubbish of a pigsty. The brats of the neighbourhood used to peep in at him through the slits in the wall, and throw pebbles, which fell on his pallet, where he lay perpetually shaken by a catarrh, with his hair very long, his eyes bloodshot, and a tumour on his arm bigger than his head. She procured linen for him, tried to clean his wretched abode, and would fain have set him up in

the bakehouse but that it would have annoyed "Madame." When the cancer had burst, she dressed it every day, sometimes brought him a muffin, which she placed on a bundle of straw under the heat of the sun; and the poor old fellow, slobbering and shaking, would thank her in his cracked voice, tremble at the thought of losing her, and stretch forth his hands when he saw her going away. He died; she got a mass said for the repose of his soul.

That day, she had a great stroke of good luck. Just at dinner-time, Madame Larsonnière's negro made his appearance holding in his hand the cage containing the parrot, with the stick, the chain, and the padlocks. A note from the Baroness informed Madame Aubain that, as her husband had been promoted to the rank of prefect, he was leaving that evening; and she begged of "Madame" to accept this bird as a keepsake and a testimony of her regard.

For a long time past this parrot had filled a place in Félicité's imagination, for he had come from America; and that word recalled Victor to her mind, so that she questioned the negro on the subject. One time she went so far as to say

to him: "Madame would be glad to be the possessor of him."

The negro had repeated the remark to his mistress, who, not finding it convenient to carry off the parrot with her, got rid of him in this fashion.





CHAPTER IV.

His name was Loulou.
His body was green, the tips
of his wings were pink, his forehead was blue, and
his throat gold-coloured.

But he had a wearisome mania for gnawing at his stick, tore off his feathers, scattered the filth of his cage about, and spilt the water in which he took his bath. Madame Aubain, who got quite tired of him, made a present of him to Félicité altogether.

She undertook to educate him; ere long he could repeat the words: "Charming boy! Your servant, monsieur! I salute you, Marie!"

He was placed near the door, and many people were astonished that he did not answer to the name of "Jacquot," since every parrot is called "Jacquot." They said he was a stupid turkey, a blockhead of a bird — and Félicité felt these remarks as if they had been so many dagger-thrusts! Nevertheless, he sought for company, for on Sunday, whilst those young ladies the Rochefeilles, Monsieur de Houpeville, and some new frequenters of the house — Onfroy the apothecary, Monsieur Varin, and Captain Mathieu — were playing their game of cards, he kept knocking against the panes with his wings, and made such a fearful noise that they found it impossible to hear one another.

Apparently, he thought Bourais's face very funny. The moment he saw this personage, he began to

laugh, to laugh with all his might. The loud peals of mirth in which he indulged made their way into the courtyard; the echo repeated them; the neighbours came out to their windows, and joined in the laugh; and, in order to avoid being seen by the parrot, M. Bourais crept along the wall with his hat drawn over his face to hide it, reached the river, and then entered by the garden gate; and there was an absence of tenderness in the looks which he cast at the parrot.

Loulou had got a fillip from the butcher's boy for having taken the liberty of putting his head into the lad's basket, and from that time always tried to give him a nip through his shirt. Fabu threatened to twist the bird's neck, though he was not a cruel youth, in spite of his tattooed arms and his hairy cheeks. On the contrary, he had rather a liking for the parrot, so much so indeed that, in a spirit of jovial good humour, he wanted to teach Loulou a few oaths. Félicité, rather terrified by these proceedings, placed the parrot in the kitchen. His little chain was taken off, and he ranged freely through the house.

When he was coming down the stairs, he would rest the curve of his beak on the steps, lift up his



right foot, and then his left;
and she was afraid that this
gymnastic performance would
give him swimmings in the head.

He got sick, and could no longer
either speak or eat. There was a thick
skin under his tongue such as hens have some-
times. She cured him by pulling off this pellicle

with her nails. M. Paul was imprudent enough one day to puff the smoke of a cigar into his nostrils; on another occasion, when Madame Lormeau provoked him with the end of her parasol, he snapped at the ferule of it; at last he got lost.

She had laid him on the grass in order that he might cool himself, and gone away for a minute or so; and, when she came back, the parrot was no longer there! She first searched for him in the thickets, at the water's edge, and on the roofs, without hearing her mistress calling out to her: "Pray take care! You are mad!" Then she examined every garden in Pont l'Évêque, and she stopped the passers-by: "Did you chance to see my parrot to-day?" For the benefit of those who were not acquainted with the parrot, she gave a description of him. All at once, she fancied she could distinguish behind the mills at the foot of the hill something green fluttering about. But on the top of the hill, nothing! A pedlar assured her that he had seen the bird a short time before at Saint Melaine in Mère Simon's shop. She hurried to the spot. They did not know what she meant. At last she returned home exhausted, with

her shoes in rags, and death in her soul; and, seated in the middle of a bench, beside "Madame," she was telling about all the steps she had taken, when she felt a light weight descending on her shoulder — Loulou! What the deuce had he been doing? Perhaps he had gone out to take a walk around the neighbourhood!

She felt sick when she referred to it — or rather she never referred to it.

Owing to a chill, she got inflammation of the throat and, a little while afterwards, an earache. Three years later, she was deaf; and she spoke in a very loud voice even at church. Although her sins would have reflected no dishonour upon her, or done no harm to the world if published in every corner of the diocese, the curé thought proper not to hear her confession except in the sacristy. Finally, she was troubled by imaginary noises. Often her mistress said to her: "Good heavens! how stupid you are!" She replied: "Yes, madame!" looking around her for something.

Her little circle of ideas had become more contracted than before; and for her the chiming of bells, the lowing of oxen, existed no longer. All

living beings discharged their functions, so far as she was concerned, with the silence of phantoms. One sound alone now reached her ears — the voice of the parrot.

As if to divert her, he reproduced the hissing sound of the roasting-jack, the shrill cry of a vendor of fish, and the noise made by the saw of the joiner who lived opposite; and, at every ring of the bell, he would imitate Madame Aubain: “Félicité! the door! the door!”

Dialogues took place between them, he repeating the three phrases which formed his whole stock of language to an extent that would have disgusted any one else, and she responding to them with words which had not much more connection, but in which she poured out her heart. Loulou, in her isolated condition, was almost a son, a lover. He climbed over her fingers, nibbled at her lips, clung to her neckerchief, and, as she bent down her forehead, shaking her head after the fashion of nurses, the big wings of her cap and the wings of the bird trembled in unison.

When the clouds gathered and the thunder rumbled, he uttered cries, perhaps recalling the showers of his natal forests. The rain falling

in torrents excited him to a pitch of frenzy; he flew about in a distracted state, mounted up to the ceiling, knocked down everything, and then darted out through the window to dabble in the garden, but speedily came back, alighted on one of the andirons, and, hopping up and down to dry his feathers, showed at one moment his tail and at another moment his beak.

One morning, in the terrible winter of 1837, when she had put him before the fireplace on account of the cold, she found him dead in the middle of his cage, with his head down and his nails in the iron wires. No doubt he had died of congestion. She believed it was a case of poisoning by parsley; and, in spite of the absence of any proof, her suspicions were directed against Fabu.

She wept so much that her mistress said to her: "Well, get him stuffed!"

She asked the advice of the apothecary, who had always been kind to the parrot.

He wrote to Havre. A certain Fellacher undertook this work. But, as parcels sometimes got mislaid when sent by the "diligence," she resolved to carry it herself as far as Honfleur.

The leafless apple-trees succeeded each other at the sides of the road. The drains were covered over with ice. Dogs were barking in the farm-yards, and with her hands under her short cloak, with little dark wooden shoes on her feet and a cottage bonnet on her head, she walked at a rapid pace in the middle of the paved road.

She made her way through the forest, walked past the Haut Chêne, and reached Saint Gatien.

Behind her, in a cloud of dust, and carried forward by the descent in the road, a mail-coach at full speed was dashing along like a water-spout. On seeing that the woman did not get out of the way, the driver rose up from under his hood, and the postilion also cried out, while his four horses, which he could not hold back, quickened their pace. The two in front just grazed her; with a shake of his reins he pulled them towards one side of the road, but in a rage he lifted up his arm and, as the coach dashed on, he gave her such a lash with his big whip from the stomach to the nape of her neck that she fell on her back.

Her first movement, when she recovered consciousness, was to open her basket. Luckily, Loulou had nothing wrong with him. She felt a

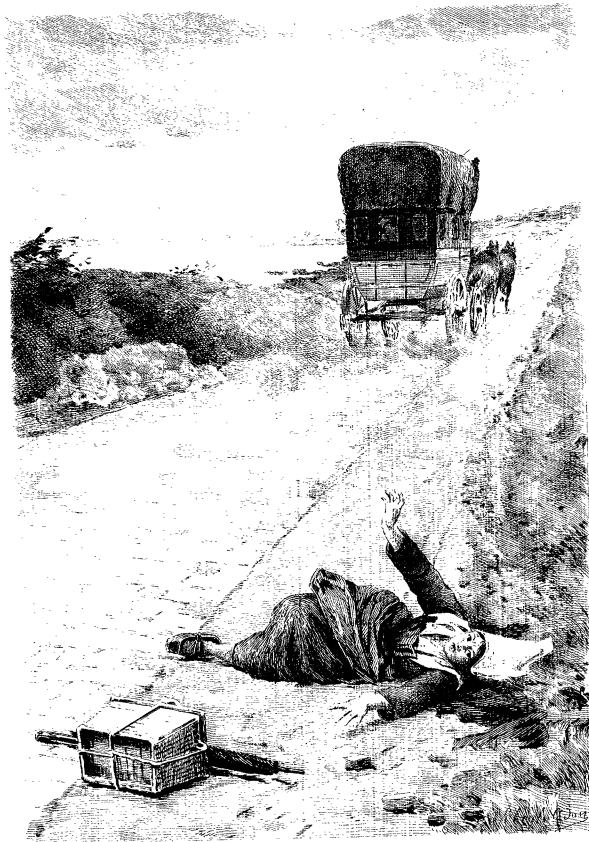
stinging sensation in her right cheek. When she touched it with her fingers they were stained red. The blood was flowing.

She sat down on a heap of broken stones, and pressed her handkerchief against her face to stop the bleeding; then she ate a crust of bread which she had put into her basket through precaution, and consoled herself for her cut by gazing at the bird.

Having arrived at the top of Ecquemauville she saw the lights of Honfleur scintillating through the darkness of night like so many stars. Further away, the sea lay spread out confusedly. Then a feeling of weakness forced her to stop; and the wretchedness of her childhood, the disappointment she suffered in her first love, her nephew's departure, and Virginie's death, came back to her all at once, and rose up in her throat with a choking sensation.

Afterwards she expressed a wish to speak to the captain of the vessel; and, without letting him know what she was sending, she gave him directions.

Fellacher kept the parrot a long time. He was always making promises to send it the following



week. At the end of six months he announced that a box was on its way; and nothing more was said about the matter. She was inclined to believe that Loulou would never come back. "They will be stealing him from me!" she thought.

At last he arrived — and looking splendid, standing erect on the branch of a tree, which was screwed into a mahogany pedestal, with his foot in the air, his head on one side, while he nibbled at a nut, which the bird-stuffer, through love of grandeur, had gilded.

She locked him up in her room. This place, into which she allowed few people to enter, had the appearance at the same time of a chapel and a bazaar, so many religious objects and odd things did it contain.

A large cupboard formed an impediment to the opening of the door. Opposite the window overlooking the garden, a bull's-eye looked out on the courtyard; a table close to the folding-bed supported a water jug, two combs, and a cube of blue soap in a notched plate. Close to the walls could be seen beads, medals, several images of the Blessed Virgin, and a holy-water basin made of cocoanut;

on the chest of drawers covered with a cloth like an altar, the shell-box which Victor had given her; then, a watering-pot and a football, a copy-book filled with writing; the geography with prints; a little pair of girl's boots; and on the nail of the looking-glass, fastened by ribbons, the little shag hat! Félicité carried this kind of reverence so far that she preserved one of the late "master's" frock coats. All the old things that Madame Aubain did not want she took for her own room. Thus it was that there were artificial flowers on the edge of the chest of drawers, and the portrait of the Count d'Artois in the recess of the skylight.

Loulou was, with the aid of a little board, set up over a chimney-stack which jutted into the room. Every morning, when she woke, she could see him in the clear light of dawn, and then she would recall the days that were gone, and insignificant actions down to the most trifling details, without grief and in a perfectly peaceful frame of mind.

Holding communication with no one, she lived in a torpor resembling that of a somnambulist. The processions of Corpus Christi revived her. She went about questing to the houses of the ladies

around her for wax tapers and mats to embellish the altar, which they were erecting in the street for the procession.

At the church, her eyes were continually fixed on the Holy Ghost, and she noticed that there was something of the parrot about Him. This resemblance appeared still more manifest in an image at Épinal representing the baptism of our Lord. With its purple wings and its emerald body it was truly the portrait of Loulou.

Having bought it, she hung it up in the place where she had kept the Count d'Artois's portrait — so that with a single glance of her eye she could see them both together.

They were associated in her thoughts, the parrot appearing to have been sanctified by this close relationship with the Holy Ghost, who had thus become more lifelike and more comprehensible to her senses. The Father, in order to give expression to Himself, could not have chosen a dove, since these birds have no voices, but rather one of Loulou's ancestors! And Félicité prayed as she looked at the image, but from time to time turned her glance a little in the direction of the bird.

She felt a desire to join the Maidens of the Virgin Mary, but was dissuaded from taking such a step by Madame Aubain.

Then came an important event — Paul's marriage.

After having been at first a notary's clerk, then in business, in the Custom House, in the Tax Office, and having even taken steps to get into the Department of Waters and Forests, suddenly, at the age of thirty, he had, by an inspiration of Heaven, discovered his proper line — the Registry! and showed such great capacity for the work that an auditor had offered him his daughter in marriage, promising to use government influence to promote his success.

Paul, having taken quite a serious turn, brought her with him to his mother's house.

She spoke disparagingly about the usages of Pont l'Évêque, assumed the airs of a princess, and wounded Félicité's feelings.

Madame Aubain felt relieved when she was gone.

In the following week they heard of M. Bourais's death in Lower Brittany at an inn. The rumour that it was a case of suicide was confirmed. Some

doubts were raised as to his integrity. Madame Aubain investigated his accounts, and was not long in making out a list of his dishonest acts — misappropriation of arrears, secret sales of timber, false receipts, etc. Moreover, he had an illegitimate child, and “relations with a woman from Dozulé.” She was sorely grieved by this shameful conduct. In the month of March, 1853, she was attacked by a pain in the chest; her tongue seemed covered with fume; leeches failed to relieve the oppression, and on the ninth evening of her illness she expired, having just reached her sixty-second year. She was supposed not to have been so old, on account of her dark hair, the head-bands of which were drawn around her pale face. She was regretted by few of her friends, her haughty manners having alienated them from her.

Félicité wept for her as servants do not usually weep for their employers. That “Madame” should have died before her troubled her thoughts, appeared to her opposed to the order of things, improper and unnatural.

Ten days later (the time that it took to come from Besançon) the heirs made their appearance

on the scene. The daughter-in-law ransacked the drawers, picked out certain articles of furniture, sold the rest, and then went back to the Registry.

Madame's armchair, her loo table, her foot-warmer, and the eight chairs were gone! The places where the engravings had hung were indicated by yellow squares in the middle of the partitions. They had carried off the two bedsteads, with their mattresses, and in the press could no longer be seen any of Virginie's little belongings! Félicité passed up the different flights of stairs stupefied with grief.

Next day, there was a bill on the door; the apothecary shouted into her ear that the house was to be sold.

She tottered, and was obliged to sit down.

The thing that crushed her most of all was having to give up her room — so convenient for poor Loulou. Casting round him a look of anguish, she invoked the aid of the Holy Ghost, and she had actually contracted the idolatrous practice of saying her prayers kneeling before the parrot. Now and then the sunbeams, penetrating through the skylight, struck the glass eye and made a great

luminous ray flash forth from it, which put her into an ecstasy.

She had an income of three hundred and eighty francs bequeathed to her by her mistress. The garden supplied her with vegetables, and she saved the cost of candles by going to bed at twilight.

She scarcely ever went out, in order to avoid the shop of the dealer in second-hand goods, in which some of the old furniture was exposed for sale. Since the occasion of her fright, she dragged one leg after her; and, as her strength diminished, Mère Simon, having failed in her little grocery-shop, came every morning to split wood and to pump water.

Her eyes had become weak. The Venetian blinds were no longer drawn. Many years passed. And the house was not let or sold.

Through fear of being sent away, Félicité did not ask to have any repairs done. The laths of the roof were rotten; during one entire winter her bolster was wet. After Easter, she spat up blood. Thereupon Mère Simon had recourse to a doctor. Félicité wanted to know what was the matter with her. But, too deaf to hear, only one word reached

her, "Pneumonia." She knew its meaning, and she said quietly : " Ah ! just like madame," thinking it perfectly natural for her to follow her mistress.

The time for open air religious processions drew nigh. The first was always at the foot of the hill, the second before the post-office, the third towards the middle of the street. There were certain rivalries on this point; and eventually the female parishioners selected Madame Aubain's courtyard.

The oppression and the feverishness had increased. Félicité was grieved at not doing anything for the decoration of the processional altar. If she had only been able to place something on it ! Then she thought of the parrot. It was not suitable, her female neighbours said by way of protest. But the curé granted the required permission, and so happy did she feel at it that she begged of him to accept, when she would be no more, Loulou — her only treasure.

From Tuesday till Saturday, the vigil of Corpus Christi, she coughed more frequently. In the evening her face was contracted ; her lips were stuck to her gums ; she began to vomit ; and, on

the following day, at early dawn, feeling very low, she had a priest sent for.

Three old women stood round her while extreme unction was being administered to her. Then she said she wanted to talk to Fabu.

He came in his Sunday clothes, ill at ease in this lugubrious atmosphere.

"Forgive me," said she, with an effort to stretch out her arms; "I thought that it was you who killed him!"

What was the meaning of such pretences? The idea of suspecting a man like him of killing anything! and he lashed himself into a state of indignation, and wanted to kick up a row.

"She is off her head! You can see that plain enough!"

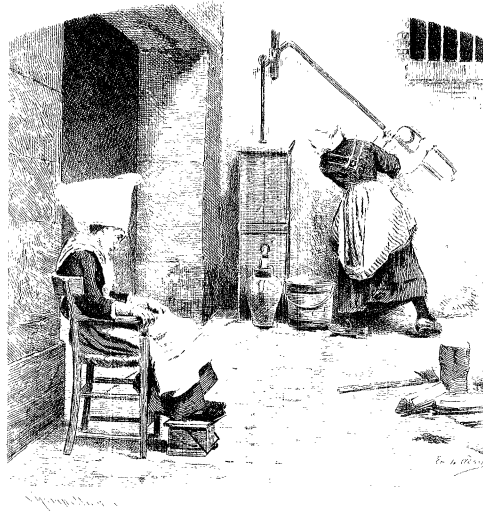
Félicité from time to time seemed to be addressing some shadowy forms. The old women slunk out. Mère Simon sat down to her breakfast.

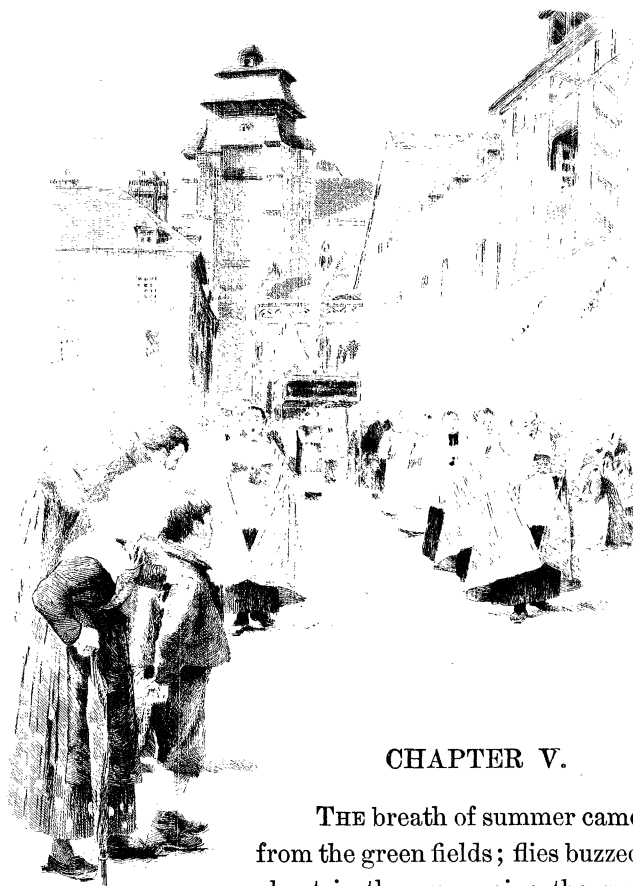
A short time afterwards, she took up Loulou, and bringing him across to Félicité:

"Come! bid him good-bye!"

Though the dead bird had been stuffed, he had been partly eaten away by maggots; one of his

wings was broken ; the tow was bursting out through his belly. But, now unable to see, she kissed his forehead, and pressed him close to her cheek. Mère Simon took him away to place him on the processional altar.





CHAPTER V.

THE breath of summer came from the green fields; flies buzzed about in the warm air; the sun was sparkling on the river and heating the slate roofs.

Mère Simon, having come back to the room, was sleeping comfortably.

She was awakened by the ringing of a bell. People were going to vespers. Félicité's delirium had passed off. As her thoughts fixed themselves on the procession, she saw it as if she had been following it.

All the children of the schools, the chanters, and the firemen were walking on the footpaths, whilst in the middle of the street advanced, first, the porter, armed with his halberd, the beadle with a large cross, the schoolmaster with his eye on the boys, the nun anxious about her little girls : three of the prettiest of them, with curls like angels, were flinging petals of roses into the air ; the deacon, with his arms out, was moderating the music ; and two censer-bearers were turning round, with every step they took, towards the Blessed Sacrament, which, under a canopy of poppy-coloured velvet held up by four vestrymen, the curé, in his beautiful chasuble, was carrying. A crowd of people kept pushing on behind, between the white cloths that covered the walls of the houses ; and so they reached the foot of the hill.

A cold perspiration moistened Félicité's temples.

Mère Simon bathed her face with a piece of linen, saying to herself that one day she would have to go the same way.

The murmur of the crowd grew louder, and for a moment was very great, and then it passed off.

A crackling report shook the window-panes. It was the postilions saluting the monstrance. Félicité rolled her eyes about, and said, in as loud a voice as she could command: "Is he all right?" still troubled about the parrot.

Her agony then commenced. A rattle, every moment becoming more rapid, made her sides heave. Bubbles of foam stood at the corners of her mouth, and her entire body trembled. Presently might be heard the braying of ophicleides, the clear voices of children, and the deep notes of men. At intervals they all ceased, and the beating of their feet, which the flowers on the ground deadened, made a noise like that of a flock of sheep on the grass.

The clergy appeared in the courtyard. Mère Simon climbed up on a chair to reach the bull's-eye, and in this way got a view of the processional altar. Green wreaths hung above it, and it was adorned with a border of Brussels lace. In the

centre of it there was a little frame in which some relics were enclosed; at the corners were two orange-trees, and all over it were silver candlesticks and porcelain vases, from which rose sun-flowers, lilies, peonies, foxgloves, and bunches of hydrangea. This heap of dazzling colours descended in a slanting direction from the first flight of steps down to the carpet which stretched out over the pavement; and some rare objects attracted the eyes of the spectators. A vermilion sugar-bowl had a crown of violets; ear-drops made of Alençon stone glittered over froth; two Chinese screens displayed their scenery. Loulou, hidden beneath roses, showed only his blue forehead, like a plate of lapis lazuli.

The vestrymen, the chanters, and the children drew up on three sides of the courtyard. The priest slowly mounted the altar-steps, and placed on the laced covering his great gold sun with its circle of rays. Every one knelt down. There was a deep silence. And the censer-bearers, moving on as quickly as possible while they swung, were slipping over their chains.

A blue vapour ascended into Félicité's room. She put out her nostrils, and inhaled it with the sensuous delight of a mystic; then she closed her



eyelids. There was a smile on her lips. The movements of her heart gradually grew slower, each time more uncertain, more gentle, as a fountain becomes exhausted, as an echo dies away; and, just as she was drawing her last breath, she imagined that she saw in the opening skies a gigantic parrot hovering above her head.





HÉRODIAS

PREFACE.

HERODIAS IN HISTORY.

GRANDSON to a poor doorkeeper of the Temple of Ascalon who was carried off by Arabian brigands, the son of a slave who had pleased his master and who, having become a military contractor to the Romans, had enriched himself out of the stores, an Idumean made in Judea a kingdom as one makes a fortune, and won by craft and audacity the sacred fillet of Solomon and Jehoshaphat.

A good administrator, a wise steward, an able undertaker of public works, a man hard and cruel, he built the Temple, founded Cæsarea, fed the people in times of famine, and massacred all his enemies. This was Herod the Great.

Very aged, in the thirty-eighth year of his reign, he was devoured by a terrible complaint, in which the Jews saw the punishment due to his crimes and his impiety. Consumed by a slow heat, he

had such a voracious hunger that nothing could satisfy it; his bowels were tormented by violent colics; his feet were swollen and livid.¹ He was suffocating; his breathing tainted the air. It was said that worms had already appeared on his stomach. Nevertheless, he was anxious to live and to reign. The physicians sent him beyond the Jordan to Callirhoë, whose hot waters flowed into a lake of bitumen. They saw him in a vat of oil where he was almost dying. He got himself conveyed to Jericho already in a state of decomposition, but his breath was sufficiently restored to enable him to decree the punishment of his son, Antipater, who wanted to poison him, and who believed himself already King of the Jews. Antipater perished when he was on the eve of reigning. This was the last pleasure experienced by the aged Herod, who, five days later, joined in the School his innumerable victims, princes of the people, priests, doctors of the law, servants, familiar friends, wife, son, Hyrcanus, Soem, Costobarus, Tero, Judas, Mathias, Alexander, Aristobulus, Antipater, and that beautiful Marianne, whom

¹ Josephus: "Antiquities of the Jews," XVII., viii. Also "Jewish Wars."

he loved even when she was dead, preserved in honey.¹

He had, at first, named Herod Antipas, his son and the son of Malthasius, the Samaritan, as his sole successor. By a new will, dictated shortly before his death, he divided his possessions between his three surviving sons. He appointed Archelaus king, with Jerusalem as capital; Herod Philip tetrarch of Traconitis, of Gaulanitis, and of Balanæa; and Herod Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and of Perea. But the Idumean had not exercised dominion, save by the friendship of Rome. His will was not valid unless it received the sanction of the Emperor. Archelaus and Antipas, whom their father had sent to Rome to be brought up as the wards of the Roman people, conceived an adequate idea as to the greatness of the Empire. Scarcely has Herod the Great, begirt with fillets, and with the crown on his forehead and the sceptre in his hand, been laid in a death-chamber in the castle of Herodion, when his favourite son, Archelaus, thought of maintaining before Augus-

¹ What Josephus says as to a scheme having been devised by Herod, when dying, to massacre all the elders of the nation confined in the circus at Jericho, does not appear credible to me, in spite of the gloss of the Talmud noted in M. de Saulcey (1867, p. 222).

tus his pretensions to the entire kingdom. He crushed with the utmost rapidity a revolt of the pious Jews, who, disgusted at feeling the hand of Esau laid on them, would fain have overthrown the son of the impious man who had violated the tomb of David and placed the Roman eagle over the portico of the Temple. As he was in a hurry, he indulged in an indiscriminate massacre, and set out for Italy with Salome, his aunt, and his entire family, with the intention of seeing the Emperor and asking him for the right and the authority to reign.

Immediately, Antipas, accompanied by relatives and advisers, followed him to Rome in order to claim also the entire inheritance of his father. At the secret instigation of the aged Salome, who had accompanied Archelaus only to betray him, Antipas went to contest before Augustus the validity of the second will, made at a time, it was said, when the mind of Herod the Great had perished before his body. Augustus listened without impatience to the humble supplications and the keen arguments, the complaints and the disputes, of these Asiatics; he swallowed without a frown this bitter honey of Idumea. Then, dismissing them both

with soft words, the suave monarch confirmed Herod's will on the condition that the most favoured of the sons should be content with the title of Ethnarch.¹

Archelaus returned to Jerusalem, and took possession of his ethnarchy, which he found stirred up by gloomy enthusiasm into a state of antipathy against him. In the eyes of this religious and haughty people, he was an impious man and a foreigner. For the purpose of keeping in subjection so many hatreds, he had neither the astuteness nor the audacity of his father. He was steeped in an effeminacy which was interrupted every now and then by outbursts of horrible violence. Stubbornly bent on gnawing at the bit, the Jews and the Samaritans wore out without too much trouble a curb so feeble. Their incessant complaints wearied Augustus, who, at the end of nine years, deposed Archelaus, and relegated him to Vienna, in the land of the Gauls, where the Idumean might burn incense at leisure in the temple of Augustus and of Livia (A.D. 6).

His brother Philip succeeded much better. This son of Herod and of Cleopatra the Hierosolymitan,

¹ Nicholas de Damas, quoted by Saulcey, *loc. cit.*, p. 377.

was a leader of a benevolent type, and full of gentleness. He displayed towards the mountaineers of Hermon a kindness unique in the family of Herod.

Meanwhile, Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and of Perea, lived in the midst of his poor people like an ostentatious host. Plunged in the sullen languor of an Oriental prince, he planned ingenious repasts and useful tricks. He had two faults which rendered him very unfortunate, — poltroonery and credulity.

According to the usage of all the Herods, he paid public honours to Cæsar, and these honours appeared impious to the Galileans. He attached to one of his cities the name of Julia, Augustus's daughter, whose forehead would have better worn the ivy of the Bacchantes than this mural wreath.

When Tiberius succeeded to the Imperial throne, Antipas strove to gain the favour of the new master of the world. He founded on the bank of the lake of Genesareth, in the midst of hillsides covered with laurels and vines, a city entirely Roman, with columns, statues, temples, and mosaics, and he named it Tiberias in honour of Tiberius (A. D. 17).

The Emperor, keenly appreciating these tributes

of respect, cherished for the tetrarch a friendship which never abated. But the Galileans, poor and pious, contemplated at a distance these porticoes, these idols, with wide-open eyes full of fever and hatred.

Antipas had married the daughter of Hareth, emir of Petra, who ruled over the Arabs dwelling in the sands between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea. The emir's daughter occupied the highest place in the tetrarch's harem. When he went on a journey to Italy (we know that he made several), he proceeded to the house of Herod, his paternal brother and son of the second Marianne, daughter of Simon the high priest. Disinherited by his father, this Herod lived like a rich private individual with Herodias, his wife, who was also his niece and the niece of Antipas, being the daughter of Aristobulus, the brother of both, whom Herod the Great had put to death.¹

¹ She was the daughter of Aristobulus and of Berenice, daughter of Salome, Herod's sister.

I find in the genealogical table drawn up by M. de Saulcey for his "History of Herod, King of the Jews" (Hachette, 1867, 8vo), this statement: (a) "Herodias *affianced but not married* to Herod, son of King Herod and Marianne, daughter of Simon. She separates from him soon after the birth of Salome, and marries Antipas the tetrarch." But in the same table I read again: (b) "Herod *affianced and married*

In her peaceful home the granddaughter of the King of the Jews was devoured by ennui. The humility of her station filled her with disgust. She felt herself born to command peoples from the interior of one of those palaces large as cities, filled with gardens and fountains; to conduct great enterprises better than a man with eunuchs and freemen; to beckon to the executioner; to possess coffers of coined money, jewels, pearls, gold plate, and warriors, — images of royalty in the soul of a Syrian woman.

When she saw Antipas, she thought that she might emerge out of a condition against which she revolted. The idea came into her head to make the tetrarch fall in love with her. Artful and very beautiful, she succeeded in this immediately. In the desire for her which possessed him, he promised to marry her on his return from Rome, after he had repudiated the daughter of Hareth.

to Herodias, daughter of Aristobulus and Berenice." (c) Antipas marries: (1) N. . . daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, and repudiates her; (2) Herodias, separated from Herod, *her first husband*. There is here between (a) on the one side, and (b) on the other side, a contradiction all the more striking because it is found in two places very near one another in the table. I think it is the information "affianced but not married" that is inaccurate. Josephus properly says that Herodias was married to Herod, son of Herod the Great and Marianne.

This project, though kept secret, was, however, discovered by the Arabian princess, who resolved to escape from the intended affront. She feigned ignorance, and besought permission from the tetrarch to repair to Machærus, whose fortress was, at the time, guarded by the soldiers of the emir of Petra. The permission was given to her. She reached Machærus, and had herself escorted thence by nomad horsemen from tribe to tribe as far as Petra, where she apprised her father of the insult which had been offered to her. The emir swore to avenge it, and waited for the opportunity of doing so.¹

In the meantime, Herodias, quitting the husband by whom she had one child, but from whom she hoped neither for glory or power, married the tetrarch. To these half-incests, which gratified the bitter and proud blood of the Herods, was, this time, added adultery. For this marriage was nothing but an audacious adultery.

The pious Galileans conceived a profound horror of it. And all those who observed the law and lived according to the Lord, all the simple, all the poor, blushed at seeing this man and woman

¹ Josephus: "Antiquities of the Jews," XVIII., vii.

exalted above their heads. The haughty Herodias, feeling the indignation of the people mounting up towards her, drew round herself a barrier of gloomy pride. But, at the bottom of her heart, she cherished for Judaism a woman's hatred, a vigilant and circumstantial hatred.

At this period the prophetic spirit had stirred up a ferment in Judea. There were men who awaited the Kingdom of God. They were sober, and chaste, and had no fear of death. About the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, reports were circulated all over Judea as to a young man named Iaokanann, or John, a native of that patriarchal city of Nebron, which guarded, amid the rocks on the threshold of the wilderness, the tombs of Abraham and of Sara, of Jacob and of Lia. Iaokanann, son of Zachary, was of sacerdotal race. He practised as a Nazarite those severe abstinences which dispose the body to receive the divine spirit. Having returned into the wilderness, he dwelt in one of those grottoes where gush forth springs over which the carob-trees lean their dark branches, and there, clad in camel's hair, with a leathern girdle round his loins, he lived on locusts and wild honey.

The desire of sanctity, the attraction of ascet-

icism, the charm of thirst and hunger, were powerful at that time. And many men who sought out extraordinary paths visited the son of Zachary in his solitude and his penitence. He spoke to them. It was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. They thought they were listening to Elias the prophet, who had not tasted death, and who had come back for the salvation of the people. Iaokanann had instituted a rule which consisted of frequent ablutions. He bathed his disciples in the waves of the Jordan, and he spilled water on their hands. This is why he was surnamed the Baptist. Innumerable pilgrims came to him, people of every sect and of every condition. Jesus of Nazareth and many of the Essenes attached themselves to the young Nazarite.

Priests, Pharisees, doctors, were anxious to hear him. He spoke to them with harshness.

“Race of vipers, who has taught you to fly from the wrath to come? Produce, then, worthy fruits of penitence.”

He attached no value whatever to that name of Son of Abraham, of which they were so proud.

“God,” said he, “could make sons of Abraham with the stones of the road.”

He vaguely announced the days of vengeance and wrath :

“ Already the axe is laid at the roots of the trees. Every tree, therefore, which does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.”¹

He taught the doctrine of the division of goods :

“ Let him who has two tunics give one of them to him who has none, and let him who has where-with to eat act in like manner.”

Such words seemed dangerous to the tetrarch, who was much more daunted still when Iaokanann treated him and Herodias as Elias the Thesbite had treated Ahab and Jezebel. The life of Antipas was abominable to the Nazarite, who regarded the union of Antipas and Herodias as impious and criminal.

The Baptist was bold enough to say to the tetrarch :

“ You have no permission to take as your wife your brother’s wife.”²

Herodias, already raging against the entire Jewish population which barked at her golden sandals, lost patience. Iaokanann was taken and brought to Machærus.

¹ Matt. iii., 7, 8, 9, 10.

² Mark vi., 18.

It was at the east of the Red Sea, in a wild waste, an enormous fortress enclosing a magnificent palace. It is said that the Rephaim and the demons, with the sons of the giants, wandered about the spot, over carpets of bitumen, amongst men and women metamorphosed into statues of salt.

There the Nazarite was guarded, with vine-stalks on his feet, according to the Eastern custom, in a courtyard under a certain gate, where all the servants, as they passed, could see and hear him.

His disciples visited him. He spoke with more violence than ever, and repeated :

“Antipas, you have no permission to have as your wife your brother’s wife.”

The tetrarch knew not what to do with this dreadful man. How could he let him go so that he might bellow forth to the people the lewdnesses of Herodias? For he would never hold his tongue.¹

Herodias said, “He must be killed.”

¹ What is certain is, that the detention was prolonged, and that John preserved in the depths of his person an extended liberty of action (Renan’s “Life of Jesus,” 13 ed., p. 16). The prison in the East has nothing in the nature of cells; the sufferer, with his feet held down by vine-stalks, is kept in sight or in open apartments, or chats with all the passers-by (*Loc. cit.*, Note to passage).

But at this idea Antipas trembled in every limb. To kill the man who baptised the people in the Jordan, drove away the demons, and uttered prophecies! To kill the saints of God!

And suppose it were really Elias the Thesbite, descended from on high? Drawn thither by a mysterious charm, Antipas often came to see his prisoner; he stopped in front of him, listened with astonishment to that utterance burning as the breath of the desert out of which it had come. The ascetic frightened him, and excited in his mind an extraordinary interest.

He remained stupefied in the presence of this prodigious being, who by fasting, abstinence, and magical practices had pierced into secrets to which the common herd of men could never find their way. Herod questioned him, asked him for revelations, signs, counsels. He would very willingly have taken this man for an astrologer and for a soothsayer. A sort of familiarity was established between the prince and the Nazarite. And Iaokannan vociferated incessantly in the fortress.¹

¹For Herod, knowing that he was a just and bold man, feared and respected him, did many things in accordance with his advice, and listened to him willingly. — Mark vi., 20.

Herodias realised that she would not obtain the Baptist's head without some extraordinary assistance. Her worn-out beauty was no longer all-powerful with this Herod, now stricken in years. Other weapons were needed. Fortunately she had her daughter, the daughter of her first marriage, Salome, beautiful as her mother had been in former days.

This year (the year of Our Lord 30) Herod Antipas was found on his birthday at Machærus. To celebrate this festival he gave, in the palace built by Herod the Great, one of those protracted banquets at which the flavour of meats and the fumes of wines heat the brains of those present. Herodias, who was prohibited by custom from attending at banquets, watched from the interior of the harem the moment for action. When she thought the feast sufficiently advanced, she sent to the guests her daughter Salome, who in the presence of the tetrarch and his guests went through one of those slow and lascivious dances, of which the East has preserved the immemorial tradition,—scenes of mimic love, where, while the feet scarcely rose from the ground, the entire body gave expression to a languishing and frantic voluptuousness.

In the bloom of youth, and skilled in fleshly wiles, the young princess gave lively pleasure to Antipas, who said to her, with the imprudence of a mind excited by intoxication :

“Ask whatever thou wilt, I will give it to thee.”

And he added, with an oath :

“Whatever thou askest I will give it to thee, were it the half of my kingdom.”

Salome went out as she had been directed to do, to consult her mother, who was anxiously awaiting her in the harem ; she then came back where Herod sat, and, with a smile, said to him those words whispered in her ear by Herodias :

“Give me here, in this bowl, the head of Iakannan the Baptist.”

She pointed towards one of the trays for fruits and pastry with which the table was laden.¹

The tetrarch, gloomy and displeased at this request, hesitated. He would fain have this time once more saved the Nazarite. But he had sworn a great oath ; if he refused a gift so just, his guests would be witnesses of his perjury, and would laugh at his weakness. The wine gave him courage.

¹ Portable trays on which, in the East, liquors and dishes are served up. (Renan's "Life of Jesus," 13th ed., p. 205. Note.)

He beckoned to the executioner, who had never left the apartment. The executioner went out. Some minutes later, he reëntered, carrying in a table-bowl the head of the Baptist, which he presented to the young girl. Salome took it and carried it away and presented it to her mother.¹

About six years after the feast at Machærus, the emir of Petra, who had been patiently planning his revenge, sought for a feigned quarrel with the tetrarch with regard to the bounds of Gamala. War having broken out, the tetrarch had, in order to maintain it, only a small band of mercenaries swollen by brigands driven from the mountain by Herod Philip. These wretches fled ignominiously before the Arabian horsemen. The Jews recognised in this defeat the arm of an avenging God, for they had not forgotten the death of Iaokanann the Baptist.²

¹ Matt. xiv., 11; Mark vi., 28. Saint Jerome says that Herodias pierced with needles the tongue that had called her Jezebel; but Saint Jerome, who was versed in profane literature, had read about the death of Cicero.

² Flavius Josephus, who does not speak of the death of John the Baptist, says: "Many Jews have thought that this defeat of Herod's army was a punishment of God on account of John, surnamed the Baptist." ("Antiquities of the Jews," VII., vii.) Here are the terms in which Josephus in another place speaks of the Baptist: "He was a man of great piety, who exhorted the Jews to embrace virtue, to

Antipas already saw the men of the desert encamping around Machærus and the horses of the old emir tramping over the plains of Galilee. In his terror he wrote to Tiberius. The Emperor still maintained his feelings of friendship towards the founder of Tiberias. Besides, the tetrarchy belonged to the Empire, which could not endure the insults of the Arabs.

Lucius Vitellius, governor of Syria, got orders to march on Petra with two legions. He assembled his troops at Ptolemais in the north of the province. His design was to cross Judea.

But the wealthy and the priests came and begged of him to renounce this project. The Jews, they said, could not behold, without being scandalised, the flags bearing Cæsar's image on their soil, because these images are contrary to the law. Vitellius, disposed to treat the Jews favourably, did not press the point, and gave orders to the legions to proceed along by the desert. When he knew that the Romans were marching on Petra, the emir, becoming restless,

exercise justice, and to receive baptism, after having rendered themselves agreeable to God, not contenting themselves with committing no sins, but joining to purity of body purity of soul."

consulted the soothsayers, who gave him this response :

“ Before the Romans enter Petra, of him who declares war, of him who makes it, and of him against whom it is made, one of the three shall die.”

If, indeed, the Arabian magicians thus spoke, their prediction was realised. Vitellius learned at Jerusalem of the death of Tiberius, and of the accession of Caius to the Imperial throne. Immediately, he recalled the legions on their march and sent them to take up their winter quarters. He himself, after having got the Jews to swear that they would be faithful to Caius, returned to Antioch and devoted his attention to Artabanes, King of the Parthians, who, having revolted, was preparing for war, and constructing huge armaments even amongst the friends of the Roman people.

The death of Tiberius was the ruin of Herod and Herodias.

Herodias had a brother, an intriguing and businesslike man, of consummate ability and wild prodigality, Agrippa, who, having been ruined at Rome, and after having eaten the oysters of Lu-

crinus, was living miserably on dates and raisins in the castle of Malatha in Idumea.

The tetrarch, in order to assist him to resume a mode of living consistent with his dignity, nominated him first magistrate of Tiberias, and assigned to him a pension. But, on days at supper, Antipas, displaying while intoxicated a gross and base soul, reminded the brother of Herodias reproachfully of the benefit which he had conferred on him, and treated him as a beggar.

Agrippa, in a rage, flung denarii and insignia in the face of this coarse drunkard, and quitted Galilee. Finding himself without resources, he returned to Italy, in order to try once more to make his fortune there. He reappeared at Rome towards the close of the reign of Tiberius, and was able to gain the favour of a monarch who, nevertheless, entertained a hatred of prodigals and spendthrifts. But Agrippa was so agreeable in manner that it was impossible to resist his importunities. Whilst he familiarly accompanied the morose Emperor into the gardens of Tusculum and over the hilly roads of Capræa, the Jew was thinking about the future. There was at that time in Italy a noble youth, chaste and sober, fed and shod like the soldiers;

this was the son of Germanicus and of Agrippina, the idol of the people and of the legions, the hope of Rome.

Agrippa, who saw how the wind blew, turned over to the side of young Caligula, insinuated himself into terms of intimacy with him, and soon knew enough to perceive that this child with the pure face possessed a corrupt soul. So he said to Caligula, "Tiberius is lasting too long."

Unhappily for Agrippa, this remark was repeated to the aged Emperor, who had the amiable Asiatic sent to prison. Agrippa was guarded rather closely. Still worse might have happened to him. When, after the death of Tiberius, Caligula was raised to the Imperial throne, he did not forget his friend, who had been a prisoner for six months.

He had Agrippa released from the dungeon, summoned him to the palace, and said to him: "Get thy hair cut: I want to put a crown on thy head." He gave him the tetrarchy of Gaulanitis and of Balanæa, which the death of Philip left vacant; he even added to it neighbouring territories and royal honours.

When Agrippa returned, crowned with the sacred fillet, into his own country, which he had quitted

poorer than a vine-dresser of Nazareth, it was a great surprise, and the man who managed his affairs so well was admired. Herodias grew withered with spite at it, and when she saw to-day this brother passing by, magnificent as the great King of the Persians, she turned pale with envy. The ambitious woman urged on the timid Antipas to go to Rome to ask for similar honours.

“If thou canst endure,” said she to him, “to maintain existence in a condition less lofty than was that of thy father, begin at least now to desire an advantage which is due to thy birth; do not be willing to be inferior to a man whom thou hast formerly fed, nor so faint-hearted as not to strive, amid the abundance of so many goods which thou dost enjoy, to obtain what he acquired when he was in such necessity as to have eaten up all he had. Go to Rome, and spare neither toil nor expense in completing this design, since there is not so much pleasure in hoarding up treasures as in employing them to gain a kingdom.”¹

Antipas loved ease. This enterprise frightened him. He had all the more repugnance to bringing his claims even into the palace of Cæsar, because for

¹ Josephus: “Antiquities of the Jews,” XVIII., lx.

some time past he had been making armaments for the King of the Parthians; his avarice had tempted him to enter into these dangerous negotiations. As he had been manufacturing arms for Artabanes, he feared, with reason, that something might be known about it in the council of the Emperor. He yielded, however, for he was weak.

He set out for the Eternal City with Herodias, who renewed during the journey Cleopatra's gorgeous displays when sailing on the Cydnus.

Agrippa had no sooner got an intimation of the departure of these two envious ones, than he sent one of his freedmen, named Fortunatus, to Caligula, with presents and a letter. Fortunatus found a favourable wind, and arrived at Puteoli at the same time as Antipas.

Caligula was then taking the waters at Baia. The tetrarch and his wife had scarcely saluted the Emperor when Fortunatus presented to Cæsar the letter whereby Agrippa accused Antipas of favouring the side of Artabanes, King of the Parthians, and of treasonably amassing in his arsenals arms for seventy thousand men.

Affected by this report, of which he at once took cognisance, Caligula had the tetrarch summoned

before him, and asked him whether he had enough to equip seventy thousand fighting men. Antipas, in his agitation, did not deny it. Cæsar from this fact alone held that he was convicted of treason, took away from him the tetrarchy, of which he made a gift to the informer, and sent the unhappy Herod Antipas into exile to Lyons, in the land of the Gauls. He showed himself, on the other hand, benevolent and generous towards the sister of his dear Agrippa. Far from involving her in the disgrace of the tetrarch, he offered to bestow on her the property of the exile. In this moment when her fortunes were broken, Herodias showed herself magnanimous. She refused the favours of Cæsar.

“It was worthy of thee,” she said to him, “to make use of him as thou didst through consideration for me. But my love for my husband forbids me to accept thy good offices. As I shared in his prosperity, it is not just that I should abandon him in his ill-fortune.”

Herodias did what she said she would do: she followed her husband into exile. They both died in obscurity in Spain.¹

¹ Josephus: “Antiquities of the Jews,” XVIII., xl.

This paragraph may reconcile two passages in Flavius Josephus

II.

HERODIAS AND GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.

THIS is all we know of Antipas and Herodias. Flavius Josephus is almost the only source of this history. As for the death of John the Baptist, it is only recorded in the synoptical Evangelists. I have not to excuse myself for having presented the facts quite simply and without art. Another comes to extract from them fascination and magic. Another will draw forth from them a gloomy splendour. We know, after what has just been related, from what a colourless narrative of Flavius Josephus the poet (this name may be applied to Flaubert) brought out the figures of Antipas and of Herodias, which he has dealt with in his restrained and powerful style with such grand results; we see how he has gathered together into a single day, and in a single place, scenes, which, if scattered, would have a languid aspect, and puts into a narrow frame a great picture.

which in reality are contradictory. We read in the "Antiquities of the Jews," XVIII., xl.: "He (Caligula) condemned him (Antipas) to perpetual exile at Lyons, which is a city of the Gauls." And we find in the "Jewish Wars:" "The Emperor gave Agrippa his tetrarchy (the tetrarch Antipas). So he (Antipas) fled to Spain, his wife accompanied him, and he died there."

This historical introduction is certainly in Flaubert's favour. It may be seen from it that this powerful magician has been able to give form and colour to the vague and shadowy outlines of history, and that his tale is a marvellous poem.¹

The author of "Salamambo," who had every sort of scrupulosity, carried that of historical exactitude very far. For each scene of his novels and of his tales, he plunged into infinite researches. We should be greatly mistaken if we believed that for his "Herodias" he contented himself with turning over the pages of Josephus.

I do not exaggerate when I say that he read at least fifty volumes before writing anything. Isaiah inspired him with the discourse which he has put into the mouth of Iaokanann. Suetonius furnished him with the essential traits of two figures of which I must say a word.

Lucius Vitellius, a governor of Syria, of whom I have scarcely spoken in my historical introduction, occupies a large place in this tale of "Herodias." He was an able administrator, but a man of low character. One day, in order to flatter the

¹ Gustave Flaubert. Three Tales: "A Simple Heart," "The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitable," "Herodias."

Emperor, he asked from Messalina the favour of being allowed to take off her shoe. He removed a buskin of hers, which he did not want to restore to her. He constantly carried it under his toga, and covered it with kisses. His son, Aulus, whom Flaubert has painted with so much power, was raised to the Imperial throne by the soldiers, and succeeded Otho. He was in reality as gluttonous as he appears in the story, and we know that he invented a dish composed of flounders' livers, peacocks' brains, flamingoes' tongues, and the milts of lampreys, which he called the *Ægis* of Minerva.

It would be interesting to relate the circumstances under which the perfect writer of this tale conceived "Herodias." But we have no information whatever on this subject. Perhaps Flaubert, who had been educated at Rouen, and who made frequent stays there, got the first idea of this tragic tale while gazing at the Salome of the Cathedral. It may be seen carved on the western front, in the midst of scenes from the history of Saint John the Baptist, on the tympan of the gate at the left-hand side. She is dancing on her head, or, rather, on her hands. This attitude has won for Salome, amongst the inhabitants of Rouen, a celebrity

which she would not have acquired otherwise. For there is nothing in her appearance to afford pleasure. Lying prostrate in her long robe, she resembles some religious demoniac of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, was it not of this wretched little figure that Gustave Flaubert was thinking when he wrote the phrase which terminates, in "Herodias," the most prodigious description of dancing that has ever been given: "She threw herself on her hands, with her heels in the air, rushing thus over the stage like a huge scarabæus."

Be this as it may, Flaubert undertook that day a difficult task,—to paint within the limits of a few pages Rome, Judea, the Gospel; but this strong man sought for difficulties. His athletic nature urged him to battle with his work. This time once more he comes forth from the struggle with the angel a conqueror.

III.

HERODIAS AND M. GEORGES ROCHEGROSSE.

WE have no longer need, for the purpose of interpreting the "Herodias" of Gustave Flaubert, of representing Herod and Salome, according to the

tradition of Christian painters, like legendary figures ; there is no necessity to renew the adorable dream with which Ghirlandajo clothed at Florence the choir of Santa Maria Novella, wherein we see the mysterious daughter of Herodias dancing at the table of some rich Florentine, with the ladies of the city at her right, and at her left lords, bankers, and even some wealthy artisans. There is no necessity to imagine, after the fashion of Bernardino Luini, and our own Gustave Moreau, some exquisite and sinister patrician, nor to give ourselves up, with Baudelaire and that refined Jean Lorrain, to the fascination of heads cut off. It was necessary, absolutely, to enter into the real and accurate environment ; it was necessary to be an archæologist, and to penetrate into Jewish antiquities.

M. Rochegrosse has gained a great and splendid position in contemporary art by the abundant richness of his imagination ; by the skill, so rare to-day, with which he has handled vast compositions ; by his science, quasi-magical, in restoring the time when myth intermingles with history ; by the impassioned style in which he displays tragic scenes in a picturesque setting ; by the ardour of sentiment

which he has blended with the curious points in archæology.

M. Georges Rochegrosse was prepared by the nature of his talent to illustrate "Herodias." . . . He was fitted for it also by the attachment and admiration that had bound him since his childhood to Gustave Flaubert. Son-in-law to Theodore de Banville, brought up in the intimate study of poetry and art, M. Rochegrosse was not much more than ten years old when, after having read "Salamambo," he painted a strange water-colour, barbaric, curious, childlike, and poetic, which his mother exhibited with a feeling of not unnatural rapture. Already Georges Rochegrosse gave promise of a rich and curious imagination, a unique gift of vision and reconstruction.

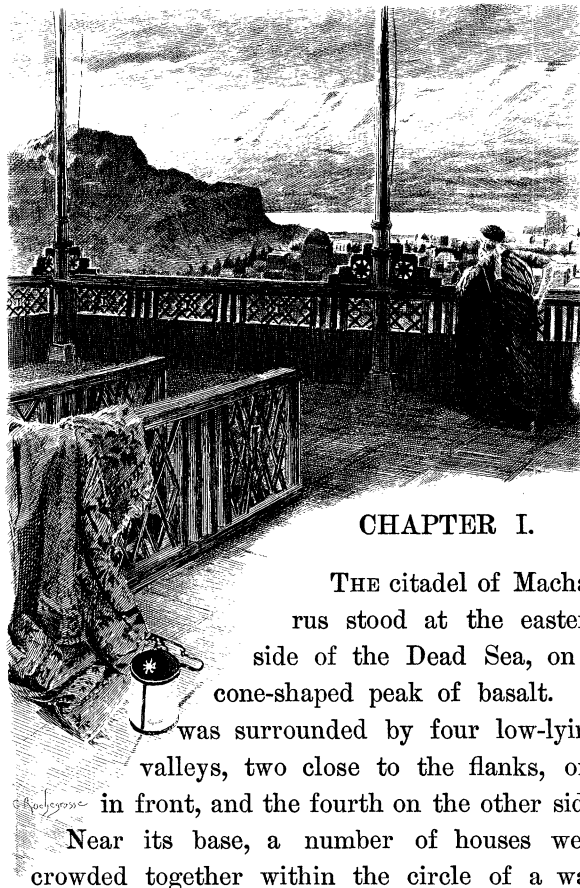
The hopes which he then gave were not vain, "and the fruits have borne the promise of the flowers."

I need not recall the "Death of Vitellius," in the Salon of 1882, or the "Andromache" of the following year, or the "Jacquerie" (1885), or the "Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar" (1886), or the "Quarry" (1887), or the "Will-o'-the-Wisps' Ball" (1887). It is only necessary to observe that in the year 1887, M. Georges Rochegrosse

had already finished a "Salome Dancing before King Herod," which was justly admired.

And without recalling the fact that the young master has already given proofs of his capacity as a water-colour artist and as an illustrator, I will only say to you: Examine the present book, which is like a sumptuous palace of which I am the door-keeper, and which M. Rochegrosse has magnificently decorated. Each of his compositions, engraved with a learned elegance, with a supple fidelity, by M. Champollion, was studied and executed by the painter, like a picture from the model, ardently, patiently, and it is the work of more than one year. The original water-colours are worthy of the painter of "Andromache," of "Vitellius," and of "Balthazar's Feast."

ANATOLE FRANCE.



CHAPTER I.

THE citadel of Machærus stood at the eastern side of the Dead Sea, on a cone-shaped peak of basalt. It was surrounded by four low-lying valleys, two close to the flanks, one in front, and the fourth on the other side. Near its base, a number of houses were crowded together within the circle of a wall which undulated according to the inequalities of

the ground; and, by a zigzag road which gashed the rock, the town was joined as if by a hoop to the fortress, whose walls were one hundred and twenty cubits high, with numerous angles, battlements on the edge, and, here and there, towers which formed, as it were, jewels in this crown of stones suspended above the chasm.

In the interior there was a palace adorned with porticoes and sheltered by a terrace, which was enclosed by a balustrade made of sycamore wood, wherein mats were placed so as to enable a velarium to be spread above them.

One morning, before daybreak, the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, came to this spot to lean on his elbows and glance around him.

The mountains immediately beneath him were beginning to expose their crests to view, while the main portions of them, down to the bottom of the chasms, were still in shadow. A fog floated through the air; it was rent, and the outlines of the Dead Sea could be seen. The dawn, rising behind Machærus, flung a red glow around. Ere long it threw its light on the sand-banks along the shore, the hillocks, the Wilderness, and, further away, all the mountains of Judea, with their sur-

faces sloping downward, rugged and gray. Engaddi, in the middle, formed a black bar; Hebron, in the background, was rounded like a dome; Esqual was crowned with pomegranates; Sorek with vines; Carmel with fields of sesame; and the Antonia Tower, with its monstrous cube, commanded a view of Jerusalem. The tetrarch turned aside his eyes to contemplate, at the right, the palm-trees of Jericho; and he thought on the other cities of his Galilee — Capernaum, Endor, Nazareth, and Tiberias, to which, perchance, he would return no more.

Meanwhile, the Jordan glided over the arid plain. Perfectly white, it looked as dazzling as a sheet of snow. And now the lake seemed made of lapis-lazuli; and at its southern point, in the direction of Yemen, Antipas recognised something that filled him with fear. Brown tents were spread about; men with lances were moving to and fro in the midst of horses; and expiring fires glittered like sparks close to the ground. They were the troops of the King of the Arabians, whose daughter he had repudiated, to take in her stead Herodias, already wedded to one of his brothers, who lived in Italy without making any claims to power.

Antipas was waiting for the Romans to come

to his assistance ; and Vitellius, governor of Syria, being tardy in making his appearance, Antipas was consumed with anxiety. Agrippa, no doubt, had ruined him with the Emperor ?

Philip, his third brother, ruler of Batavia, was secretly arming. The Jews no longer wanted his idolatrous customs, nor any of the others his domination, so that he was hesitating between two projects, to pacify the Arabians, or to conclude an alliance with the Parthians ; and, under the pretext of celebrating his anniversary, he had invited for this very day, to a great feast, the officers of his forces, the managers of his estates, and the leading men of Galilee.

He cast a keen, searching glance over all the roads. They were quite bare. Eagles were flying above his head ; along the ramparts, the soldiers lay asleep close to the walls ; there was not a stir within the castle.

Suddenly a distant voice, breaking forth as if from the very depths of the earth, made the tetrarch grow pale. He bent forward to listen ; it had ceased. Presently, he heard it again, and, clapping his hands together, he called out : “ Mannæï ! Mannæï ! ”

A man presented himself, naked down to the waist, like the shampooers in baths. He was very tall, old, and emaciated, and wore over his thigh a hanger in a bronze scabbard. The fashion in which his hair was raised by a comb seemed to make his forehead longer. His eyes were discoloured from the effects of recent sleep, but his teeth shone brilliantly, and his toes rested lightly on the flagstones, his entire body having the suppleness of an ape and his face the impassiveness of a mummy.

"Where is he?" the tetrarch asked.

Mannæi answered, while he indicated with his thumb an object behind them:

"There! the same as ever!"

"I thought I heard him!" And Antipas, when he had drawn a great breath, made inquiries about Iakanann, whom the Latins call Saint John the Baptist. "Had those two who had been admitted as a favour, a month before, into his dungeon,



been seen again, and had it been ascertained, since then, what they had come for?"

Mannæi replied :

"They exchanged some mysterious remarks with him, like thieves at the cross-roads by night. Then they started for Upper Galilee, announcing that they would bring great tidings."

Antipas hung down his head, then with a scared look :

"Keep guard over him ! Keep guard over him ! And let nobody go in ! Fasten the door securely ! Let the pit be covered over ! It must not even be suspected that he is alive !"

Even without receiving those orders, Mannæi might have been relied on to fulfil his master's wishes. Iaokanann was a Jew, and, like all the Samaritans, Mannæi execrated the Jews. Their temple at Gerizim, designated by Moses as the centre of Israel, no longer existed since the time of King Hyrcanus ; and that of Jerusalem lashed them into madness as an insult and a permanent injustice. Mannæi had effected an entrance into it in order to defile the altar with the bones of corpses. His companions, less swift-footed, had been decapitated.

He perceived it in the space between two hills. The sun made its white marble walls and the gold plates on its roof gleam with additional splendour. It was like a luminous mountain, something superhuman, crushing down everything with its opulence and its pride.

Then he stretched out his arms in the direction of Zion; and, drawing himself up to his full height, flinging back his head, and clenching his fists, hurled at it an anathema, believing that the words possessed an effective force.

Antipas listened to him without appearing to be scandalised.

The Samaritan again spoke: "At times he gets restless; he would like to fly; he hopes for a deliverance. At other times he has the quiet look of a sick beast; or else I see him walking about in the darkness, repeating, 'What doth it matter? In order that he should increase, it is necessary that I should diminish!'"

Antipas and Mannæï exchanged glances. But the tetrarch was tired with constant thinking.

All these mountains around him, resembling flights of stairs formed by great petrified waves, the black whirlpools at the side of the cliffs, the

immensity of the blue sky, the dazzling splendour of the new-born day, and the depth of the chasms, disturbed his mind; and a feeling of desolation took possession of him at the sight of the Wilderness, whose wasted surface suggested to the imagination pictures of amphitheatres and fallen palaces. The hot wind carried through the air, with the odour of sulphur, the exhalation, as it were, of the accursed cities buried at a lower level than the shore under the sluggish waters. These marks of an immortal wrath generated in his mind a sense of terror; and he remained leaning, with his two elbows over the balustrade, his eyes staring fixedly, and his hands clasped round his temples.

Some one touched him. He turned round. Herodias stood before him.

A simar of light purple fell round her down to her sandals. Having rushed out of her chamber hurriedly, she had put on neither necklaces nor eardrops. A tress of her black hair fell over one of her arms, and the end of it sank into the space between her two breasts. Her overstrained nostrils were quivering; her face was lighted up with the joy of a triumph; and in a loud voice, while she shook the tetrarch:

“Cæsar is our friend! Agrippa is in prison!”

“Who told thee so?”

“I know it!”

She added:

“It is because he wished Caius to have the Empire!”

While living on their charity, he had been intriguing to obtain the title of king, of which they were ambitious, as well as he. But in the future, no more fears! “The dungeons of Tiberius are hard to open, and sometimes existence is not secure in them!”

Antipas grasped her meaning, and, though she was Agrippa’s sister, her atrocious design seemed to him justifiable. These murders were the inevitable sequel of events, a fatality in royal houses. In that of Herod they were no longer taken into account.

Then she made a parade of her enterprise,—the letters she had discovered, the spies she had placed at every door, and the way in which she had succeeded in bribing Eutyches, the informer.

“It was no trouble to me! Have I not done more for thee? I have abandoned my daughter!”

After her divorce she had left this child in

Rome, quite confident that she would have others by the tetrarch. She had never before spoken to him about the subject. He asked himself what was the cause of this access of tenderness on her part.

The attendants had spread out the folds of the velarium, and briskly carried large cushions close to where they were. Herodias sank down on one, and with her back turned began to weep. Then she passed her hand across her eyelids, said that she wanted to think no more about it, and that she was quite happy; and she recalled to him their chats over in Rome in the atrium, their meetings at the baths, their walks along the Via Sacra, and the evenings they had spent in the great villas with fountains murmuring close beside them, and arches of flowers over their heads in front of the Campus Martius. She gazed at him as she used to do in days gone by, coming so close to him as to touch his breast with coaxing movements.

He repulsed her. The love which she was trying to rekindle now seemed so far away. And all his misfortunes had flowed from it; for the war had been going on for nearly twelve years. She had made the tetrarch look old. His shoulders



were bent under his dark toga with violet edging; his white hair had got tangled in his beard, and the sunlight, penetrating through the awning, bathed in its radiance his careworn brow. That of Herodias also showed some wrinkles; and they sat facing one another with looks of sullen gloom.

People were beginning to gather along the roads through the mountain. Herdsmen were goading on oxen; children were dragging asses along; grooms were leading forward horses. Those who had descended the heights on the other side of Machærus disappeared behind the castle; others ascended the ravine in front, and, having arrived at the town, unloaded their packs in the yards. These were the purveyors of the tetrarch and certain men-servants who had come in advance of his guests.

But, at the lower end of the terrace, on the left, an Essene appeared in a white robe, with bare feet and a stoical air. Mannæï, at the right-hand side, sprang forward, with his hanger raised.

Herodias called out to him, "Kill him!"

"Stop!" said the tetrarch. He stood motionless; the other did the same. Then they withdrew

each by a different staircase, moving backward without losing sight of one another.

"I knew him!" said Herodias. "His name is Phanuel, and he is trying to see Iaokanann, since thou hast the blindness to preserve him!"

Antipas urged by way of excuse that one day he might be useful. His attacks on Jerusalem won over to them the rest of the Jews.

"No," she rejoined; "they accept all masters, and are not capable of forming a nation!" As for him who had stirred up the people with hopes cherished since the days of Nehemias, the best policy was to crush him.

There was no immediate necessity for it, in the tetrarch's opinion. "Iaokanann dangerous! Come now!" And he affected to laugh at the notion.

"Be silent!" And she referred once more to the humiliation she had suffered one day when she was going to Gilead for the balm-harvest. "People were putting on their clothes on the bank of the river. On a neighbouring hillock, a man was speaking. He wore a camel's skin around his loins, and his head resembled that of a lion. As soon as he saw me, he spat forth at me all the maledictions of the prophets. His eyeballs flamed;

his voice roared ; he lifted up his arms as if to snatch the thunderbolt. To fly was impossible ! My chariot's wheels had sand up to their axletrees ; and I had to make my way slowly from the spot, sheltering myself under my mantle, frozen by those insults which fell on my head like a rain-storm."

Iaokanann prevented her from living. When they had taken him and bound him with cords, the soldiers were ordered to stab him if he resisted ; he displayed the utmost gentleness. Snakes were put into his prison ; they died.

The futility of these snares exasperated Herodias. Besides, why did he wage a war against her ? What interest impelled him to do so ? His discourses, addressed in loud tones to multitudes, had been spread about and circulated amongst the people ; she heard them everywhere ; the air was filled with them. Against legions she might have exhibited bravery. But this force, more pernicious than swords, incapable of being grasped, was stupefying ! And she rushed over the terrace, pallid with rage, and finding no words to give utterance to the feelings that were choking her.

She was thinking, too, that the tetrarch, yield-

ing to public opinion, would perchance take it into his head to repudiate her. In that case all would have been lost! Since her childhood, she had nourished the dream of a mighty empire. It was in order to realise it that she had forsaken her first husband and united herself to the man who, she thought, had duped her.

"I found a good prop to rest on when I entered thy family!"

"It is as good as thine!" said the tetrarch, simply.

Herodias felt the blood of the priests and the kings, who had been her ancestors, boiling in her veins.

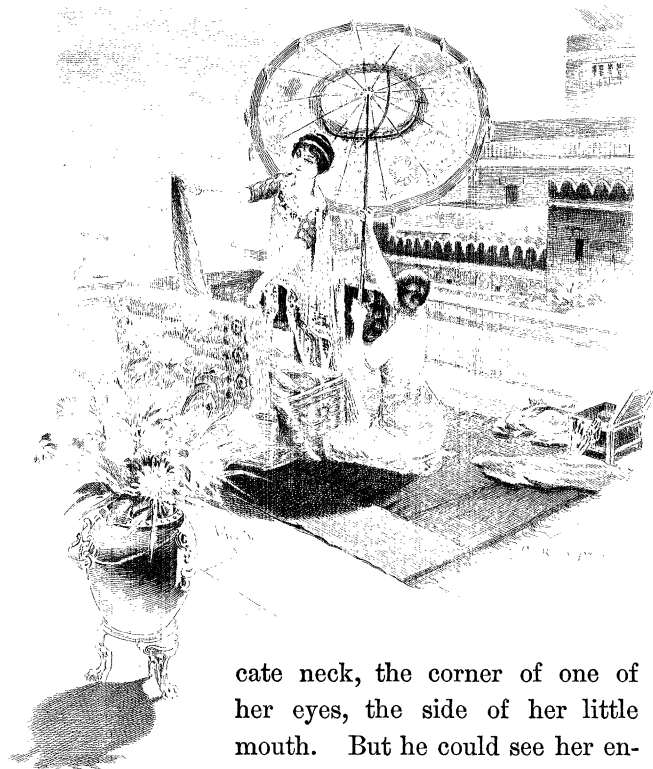
"Why, thy grandfather swept the Temple of Ascalon! The others were shepherds, bandits, drivers of caravans, a horde who paid tribute to Judah since the time of King David! All my ancestors have beaten thine! The first of the Maccabees drove ye out of Hebron; Hyrcanus forced ye to circumcise yourselves!"

And, giving full vent to the scorn of the patrician for the plebeian, the hatred of Jacob against Edom, she reproached him with his indifference to insults, his weakness towards the Pharisees, who

betrayed him, his cowardice towards the people, who detested him.

“Thou art the same as themselves — avow it! and thou regrettest the Arab girl who dances about the stones! Take her back! Go and live with her in her canvas dwelling; devour her bread baked under the ashes; swallow the curdled milk of her sheep; kiss her blue cheeks, and forget me!”

The tetrarch was no longer listening. He was gazing at the flat roof of a house, whereon he perceived a young girl, and an old woman holding a parasol with a reed handle long as a fishing-line. In the middle of the carpet a large travelling-hamper lay open. Girdles, veils, and jewelled pendants were bursting out of it confusedly. At intervals the young girl stooped towards those objects, and shook them in the air. She was attired like the Roman ladies, in a calamistrated tunic, with a peplum adorned with emerald tassels, and blue leather bands fastened her hair, which was apparently too heavy, for from time to time she raised her hand to it. The shadow of the parasol extended over her so as to half hide her person from view. Antipas noticed two or three times her deli-



cate neck, the corner of one of her eyes, the side of her little mouth. But he could see her entire figure, from the hips to the nape of the neck, bending down only to rise up again in an elastic fashion. As he watched the repetition of this movement, his breathing grew more laboured, and flames flashed from his eyes.

Herodias was observing him.

He asked, "Who is this?"

She replied that she could not tell who it was, and then she went away, suddenly calmed down.

Under the porticoes some Galileans, the writing-master, the steward of the pasture-lands, the manager of the salt-works, and a Jew from Babylon, who commanded his horsemen, were awaiting the tetrarch. They all saluted him with acclamation. Then he disappeared in the direction of the inner rooms.

At the corner of a lobby Phanuel rose up.

"Ha! here again! Doubtless, thou comest to see Iaokanann?"

"And thee, too! I have to inform thee of an important matter."

And, without quitting Antipas, he made his way after the tetrarch into a dark chamber.

The light of day was falling through an iron grating, along which it spread out just under the cornice. The walls were painted in a garnet colour nearly black. At the further end might be seen a bed of ebony, with straps of ox's hide. Above it a buckler of gold glittered like a sun.

Antipas passed across the entire hall and lay down on the bed.

Phanuel was standing. He raised his arms, and in the attitude of one inspired :

“The Most High every now and then sends one of His sons. Iaokanann is one of them. If thou shouldst oppress him, thou shalt be chastised.”

“It is he who persecutes me!” exclaimed Antipas. “He wanted me to do an act which is impossible. Since then he has lacerated me. And, in the beginning, I was not harsh! He has even despatched some men from Machærus to ruin my provinces. Woe to his life! Since he attacks me, I defend myself!”

“There is too much violence in his fits of anger,” returned Phanuel. “No matter! he must be set free.”

“We do not let loose wild beasts,” said the tetrarch.

The Essene replied: “Be not uneasy. He will go amongst the Arabians, the Gauls, the Scythians. His work must extend to the farthest corner of the earth.”

Antipas seemed lost in a vision. “His power is great. In spite of myself, I love him.”

"Then, let him be free."

The tetrarch shook his head. He was afraid of Herodias, Mannæi, and the unknown.

Phanuel tried to persuade him, advancing as a security the friendliness of his projects, the submission of the Essenes to the kings.

Respect was due to these poor men, whom tortures could not subdue, who clothed themselves in unspun linen, and read the future in the stars.

Antipas recalled a phrase which the other had made use of a few minutes before.

"What is this thing which thou didst announce to me as important?"

A negro appeared upon the scene. His body was white with dust. He spoke with a sort of gurgle, and was only able to say:

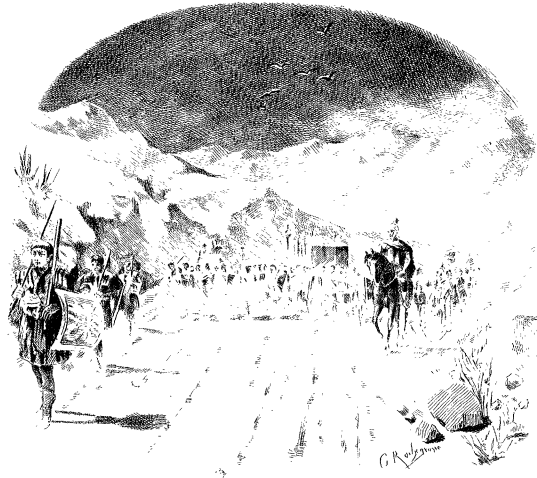
"Vitellius!"

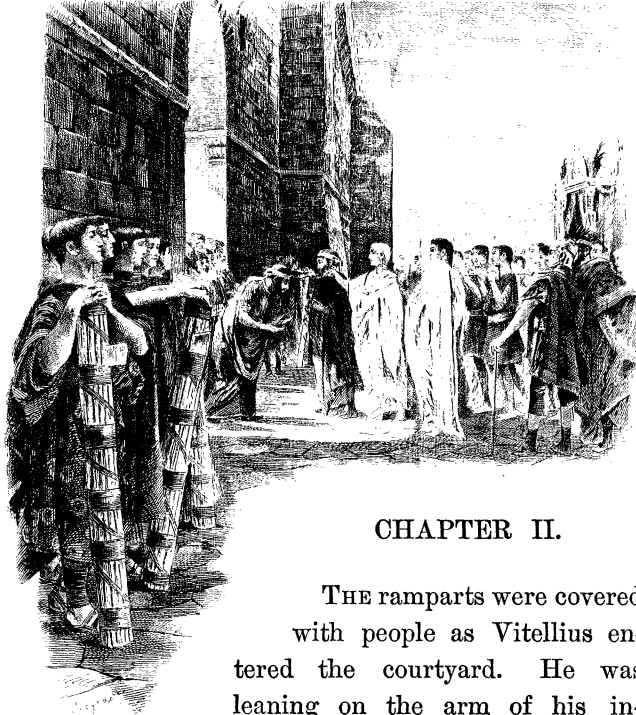
"What? Is he coming?"

"I have seen him. He is to be here before three hours."

The door-curtains of the corridors were shaken as if by the wind. The castle was filled with a clamour, the hubbub of people rushing to and fro, of furniture being dragged about, and of

plate falling down; and from the summits of the towers horn-trumpets were blowing to give warning to slaves who were scattered here and there.





CHAPTER II.

THE ramparts were covered with people as Vitellius entered the courtyard. He was leaning on the arm of his interpreter, followed by a large litter adorned with plumes and mirrors, with the toga, the laticlave, and the buskins of a consul on his person, and surrounded by lictors.

They planted against the door their twelve fasces, rods bound together by a thong, with an axe in the

middle. Then, all trembled before the majesty of the Roman people.

The litter, which eight men were propelling, stopped. A young man stepped out of it, big-bellied, with a pimpled face, and his fingers covered with pearls. A cup of spiced wine was presented to him. He drank it, and called for a second cup.

The tetrarch fell at the proconsul's feet, grieved, as he said, at not having been sooner aware that he was favouring them with his presence. Otherwise, he would have given orders for everything needed by the Vitellii. They were descended from the goddess Vitellia. A public way leading from the Janiculum to the sea bore their name. There had been innumerable quæstorships and consulates in the family; and, as for Lucius, who was now his guest, gratitude was due to him as the conqueror of the Clitæ and father of this young Aulus, who seemed to be coming back to his own domain, since the East was the fatherland of the gods.

These hyperboles were uttered in Latin. Vitellius accepted them impassively.

He replied that the great Herod sufficed for the glory of a nation. The Athenians had bestowed

on him the superintendence of the Olympic games. He had built temples in honour of Augustus, had been patient, ingenious, terrible, and ever faithful to the Cæsars.

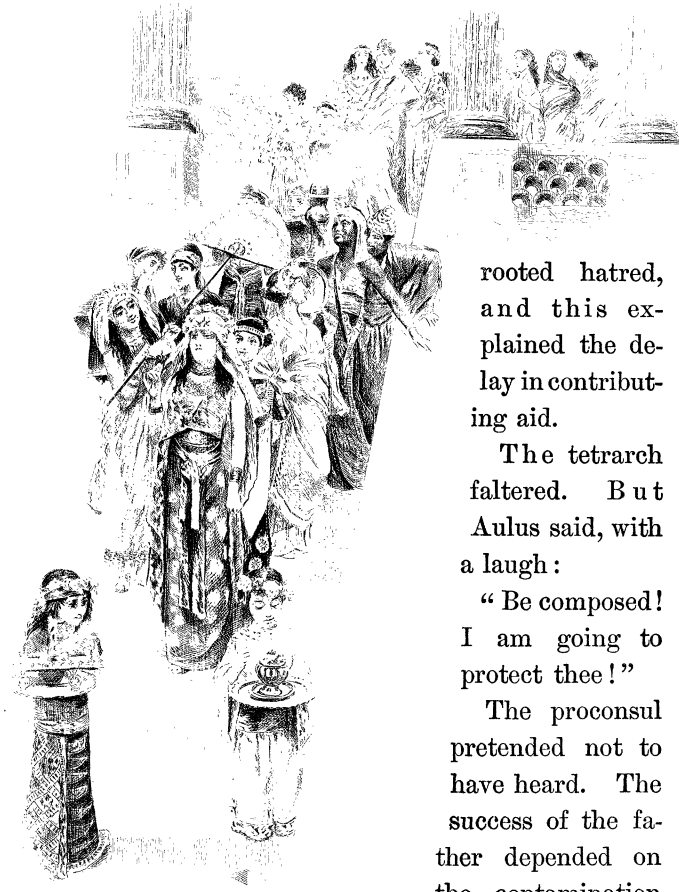
Between the columns with their brazen capitals, Herodias was seen advancing, with the air of an empress, in the midst of women and eunuchs bearing vermillion trays whereon were lighted perfumes.

The proconsul took three steps forward to meet her, and, having saluted her with an inclination of the head :

“What good fortune,” she exclaimed, “that henceforth Agrippa, the enemy of Tiberius, will be utterly unable to do any harm !”

He was ignorant of the event ; she appeared to him dangerous ; and, as Antipas was protesting with an oath that he would do anything for the Emperor, Vitellius interpolated :

“Even to the detriment of others ?” He had taken hostages from the King of the Parthians, and the Emperor did not bestow another thought upon it ; for Antipas, who had been present at the conference, in order to make much of himself, had at once sent tidings of it. Thence arose a deep-



rooted hatred,
and this ex-
plained the de-
lay in contribut-
ing aid.

The tetrarch
faltered. But
Aulus said, with
a laugh :

“ Be composed !
I am going to
protect thee ! ”

The proconsul
pretended not to
have heard. The
success of the fa-
ther depended on
the contamination

of the son ; and he treated with the utmost re-

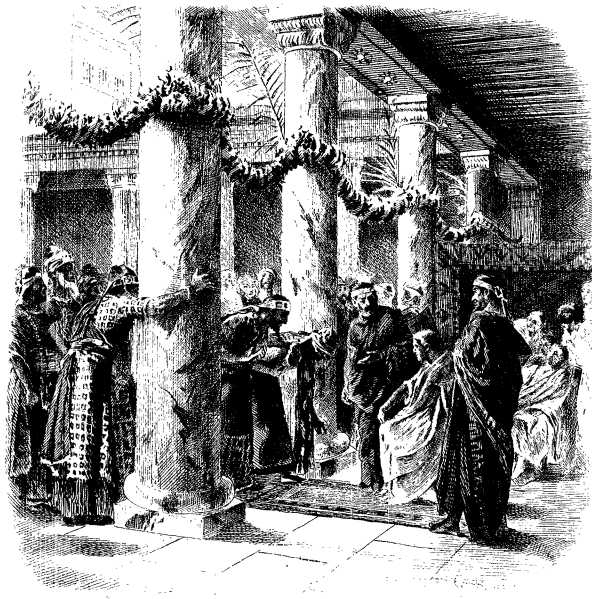
gard this blossom of the mires of Capreæ, whereby he had gained such considerable advantages, even while he was filled with distrust of such a poisonous growth.

Under the gateway a tumult had arisen. A row of white mules, on which were mounted persons in the costumes of priests, entered the castle. These were some Sadducees and Pharisees, whom the same ambition drove to Machærus, the former through the desire of obtaining the sacrificial office, and the latter of keeping possession of it. Their countenances were gloomy, especially those of the Pharisees, who were hostile to Rome and to the tetrarch. The lappets of their tunics embarrassed them in the midst of the confused throng of people around them; and their tiaras waved on their foreheads over parchment fillets, whereon were traced passages from the Scriptures.

Almost at the same time arrived some soldiers of the vanguard. They had put their bucklers into sacks as a precaution against the dust; and behind them was Marcellus, lieutenant of the proconsul, with some publicans, holding wooden tablets under their arms.

Antipas called out the names of the principal

persons in his employment—Tolmaï, Canthera, Sebon, Ammonius of Alexandria, who purchased asphalt for him, Naamann, captain of his Velites, and Jacim, the Babylonian.



Vitellius had noticed Mannæï.

“Who is that, pray?”

The tetrarch signified by a gesture that he was the executioner.

Then he presented the Sadducees. Jonathan, a little man, who took no part in intrigues, and who spoke Greek, begged of the master to honour them with a visit to Jerusalem.

He would in all probability go there. Eleazar, who had a hooked nose and a long beard, claimed back for the Pharisees the mantle of the High Priest, detained in the Antonia Tower by the civil authority.

After this the Galileans denounced Pontius Pilate. Merely because a madman had searched for the golden vessels of David in a cavern, he had killed some of the inhabitants; and all of them kept talking at the same time, Mannæi more violently than the rest. Vitellius gave an assurance that the criminals would be punished.

Vociferations burst forth opposite a portico, where the soldiers had hung up their bucklers. The housings having been unloosed, the face of Cæsar could be seen on each projecting boss. To the Jews this seemed a form of idolatry. Antipas harangued them, while Vitellius, in the colonnade, on a raised seat, was amazed at their fury. Tiberius had been quite right in banishing four hundred of them into Sardinia. But amongst these people

they were aggressive ; and he ordered them to take away the bucklers.

Thereupon, they gathered round the proconsul, imploring from him satisfaction for wrongs, privileges, and alms. The garments were torn ; there was a crush ; and, in order to make room, slaves went striking about right and left with sticks. Those next the gate proceeded to descend the foot-track ; others were coming up the ascent ; they were pushed back ; two currents crossed one another in the swaying mass of people squeezed together within the enclosing wall of the fortress.

Vitellius asked why there was such a large array of visitors. Antipas explained the cause of it — the feast of his anniversary ; and he pointed towards a number of his people who, leaning over the battlements, were hauling up enormous baskets of meat, fruit, and vegetables, together with antelopes and storks, large azure-coloured fishes, grapes, watermelons, and pomegranates heaped up in pyramids.

Aulus could not stand it. He made a rush towards the kitchens, carried away by that appetite for gormandising, which was destined to astonish the world. While passing near a cellar, he

perceived copper vessels resembling breastplates. Vitellius came to look at them, and required them to open for him the subterranean chambers of the fortress.

They were cut in the rock in the form of lofty vaults, with pillars at regular distances from each other. The first contained armour of a bygone period; but the second was filled to excess with pikes, which all stretched out their points rising out of plumes of feathers. The third seemed carpeted with reed-mats, so straight were the thin arrows drawn up side by side. The partitions of the fourth were covered with the blades of scimitars. In the middle of the fifth, rows of helmets made, with their dyed crests, as it were, a battalion of red serpents. In the sixth, nothing but quivers could be seen; in the seventh, nothing but greaves; in the eighth, nothing but armlets; in the adjoining chambers, *furcæ*, grappling-irons, ladders, cordage, and even masts for the catapults, and little bells for the breastplates of the dromedaries; and, as the mountain descended, widening towards its base, hollowed in the interior like a bee-hive, there were underneath these chambers others more numerous, and of still greater depth.

Vitellius, Phineas his interpreter, and Sisenna, the chief of the publicans, made their way through them by the light of torches which were carried by three eunuchs.



In the shade could be distinguished hideous objects invented by the barbarians,—tomahawks garnished with nails, javelins which poisoned the wounds they inflicted, and pincers resembling crocodiles' jaws. In short, the tetrarch possessed in

Machærus the requirements of forty thousand men in time of war.

He had collected them in order to be provided against a combination of his enemies. But the proconsul had it in his power to believe or to affirm that it was in order to wage war with the Romans; and he sought for an explanation.

They were not for himself. Many of them had been used as a means of defence against brigands. Moreover, he had need of them against the Arabians; or, rather, all these things had belonged to his father.

And, instead of walking behind the proconsul, he strode forward rapidly in front of him. Then he drew up close to the wall, which he hid with his toga, thrusting out his two elbows. But above his head appeared the upper portion of a doorway. Vitellius noticed it, and wanted to know what was shut up behind it.

The Babylonian alone was able to open it.

“Call the Babylonian!”

The attendants went to look for him. His father had come from the banks of the Euphrates to offer himself to Herod the Great, with five hundred horsemen, for the purpose of defending the eastern

frontiers. After the division of the kingdom, Jacim had lived with Philip; and now he served Antipas.

He made his appearance with a bow on his shoulders, and a whip in his hand. Cords of many colours were tightly twisted round his crooked legs. His big arms emerged from a sleeveless tunic, and a fur cap shaded his face, on which the beard was curled in ringlets.

At first, he seemed not to understand the interpreter. But Vitellius darted a look at Antipas, who immediately repeated his command. Thereupon Jacim pressed his two hands against the door. It slid into the wall.

A breath of warm air came forth from the darkness. A winding path led downwards; descending by it, they reached the threshold of a grotto, of larger size than the other subterranean chambers.

An arcade disclosed itself at the end of the precipice, which protected the citadel on that side. A honeysuckle, clinging to the vault, allowed its flowers to fall down in the broad light. Close to the ground a little stream of water was gurgling.

There a number of white horses — a hundred, possibly — were eating barley from a board raised

to a level with their mouths. They all had their manes painted blue, their hoofs in esparto mittens, and the hair between their ears puffed over their foreheads like wigs. They lashed their hams softly with their exceedingly long tails.

The proconsul gazed at them in silent admiration.

They were marvellous animals, supple as snakes, and nimble as birds. They started with the horseman's arrow, knocked down the grooms, biting at their stomachs, extricated themselves from the impediment of the rocks, leaped over the chasms, and for an entire day continued their frantic gallop through the plains. A word made them stop.

As soon as Jacim entered, they came over to him like sheep when the shepherd appears; and, advancing their necks and shoulders, they looked at him anxiously with their childlike eyes. In accordance with his custom, he sent forth from the depths of his throat a hoarse cry which filled them with delight, and they pranced, eager for space, and craving to rush off.

Antipas, fearing that Vitellius might carry them away with him, had imprisoned them in this place, specially prepared for the animals in case of a siege.

“The stabling is bad,” said the proconsul, “and thou runnest the risk of losing them! Make the inventory, Sisenna!”

The publican drew a tablet out of his girdle, counted the horses, and wrote down the number.

The agents of the fiscal companies corrupted the governors, in order to plunder the provinces. This one was in the habit of smelling about everywhere with his polecat’s jaw, and his blinking eyes.

At length they reascended into the courtyard.

Round sheets of bronze in the midst of the paved ways here and there covered the cisterns. He observed one of them, larger than the rest, which did not ring so loudly under the heels. He stamped on them all in turn, then yelled, as he moved his feet up and down :

“I have it! I have it! Here is where Herod’s treasure is!”

The search for his treasures was a mania of the Romans. The tetrarch swore that they did not exist.

Nevertheless, what was under this place?

“Nothing! — a man; a prisoner.”

“Show him!” said Vitellius.

The tetrarch did not obey; the Jews would

have known his secret. His repugnance to opening the round bronze covering made Vitellius grow impatient.

“Break it in!” he cried to the lictors.

Mannæi had formed a conjecture as to what they were about to do. He believed, when he saw the axe, that they were going to decapitate Iao-kanann; and he stopped the lictor the moment the first blow was struck on the plate, slipped in between it and the ground a kind of hook, then, stiffening his long, thin arms, gently raised it up. It fell down. Every one wondered at the strength of this old man. Under the lid, which was lined with wood, stretched a trap-door of the same size. With a stroke of his fist, he made the two panels of which it was composed fly apart. Then an enormous pit could be seen, around which wound a staircase without any hand-rail; and those who stooped over the edge of it perceived at the bottom something vague and dreadful.

A human being was lying on the ground, his long hair intermingling with the hairy skins of beasts which covered his back. He rose up. His forehead touched a grating, which was fastened horizontally, and from time to time he disappeared

from view in the depths of his cave. The sun lighted up the points of the tiaras and the pomels of the swords, and made the flagstones intolerably hot; and doves, flying over the friezes of the columns, wheeled above the courtyard. It was the hour when Mannæi usually flung grain to them. He remained in a squatting posture in front of the tetrarch, who was standing close beside Vitellius. The Galileans, the priests, and the soldiers formed a circle in the rear. All awaited, in a state of breathless suspense, what was going to happen next.

The first thing they heard was a great sigh uttered by a hollow voice.

Herodias heard it at the other end of the palace. Yielding to a certain fascination she passed through the crowd; and she listened, with one hand on Mannæi's shoulder, and her body bent forward.

The voice was raised :

“ Woe to ye, Pharisees and Sadducees, race of vipers, inflated leather bottles, resounding cymbals.”

Those present recognised Iaokanann. His name was whispered about, and other persons rushed to join the throng.



“Woe to thee, O people, and to the traitors of Judah, to the drunkards of Ephraim, to those who dwell in the valley of uncleanness, and who stagger under the fumes of wine!

“Let them be scattered, like the water which flows away, like the slug who melts as he crawls along, like the abortive child of the woman that does not look upon the sun.

“Thou shalt need, O Moab, to take shelter in the cypress-trees, like the sparrows; in the caverns, like the jerboas. The gates of fortresses will be broken more quickly than walnut-shells; the walls will crumble; the cities will burn; and the scourge of the Eternal will not stop. He will tear ye like a new harrow; he will scatter over the mountains the pieces of your flesh!”

What conqueror was he referring to? Was it Vitellius? The Romans alone were able to accomplish such an extermination as this.

Some impatient murmurs found vent. “Enough! Enough! Let him finish!”

He went on in a louder tone: “Beside the corpses of their mothers, the infants will creep over the ashes. A man will go to seek for his bread through the rubbish at night, even expos-

ing himself to the peril of swords. The jackals will tear bones in the public places, where that evening the old men had been talking together. Thy virgins, while gulping down their tears, will play on the cithara at the feasts of the stranger, and thy bravest sons will lower their spines, flayed by burdens which are too heavy for them."

The people beheld once more the days of their exile, all the catastrophes of their history. They were the words of the ancient prophets. Iaokanann sent them, one after the other, like great blows.

But now the voice became soft, harmonious, like the cadence of a song. He announced a deliverance, splendours in the sky, the new-born babe with one arm in the dragon's cave, gold in place of clay, the desert blooming like a rose. "That which is now worth sixty kikkars will not cost an obolus. Fountains of milk will gush forth from rocks. People will go to sleep in the wine-presses with their bellies full. When wilt Thou come, Thou whom I hope for? All the people kneel down beforehand, and Thy dominion shall be eternal, O Son of David!"

The tetrarch fell back a step or two, for the

existence of a Son of David outraged him like a menace.

Iaokanann inveighed against him on account of his royalty, — “There is no other king but the Eternal,” — and on account of his gardens, his statues, and the ivory objects that adorned his household, like the impious Ahab.

Antipas broke the string of the seal which hung over his breast, and dashed it into the pit, while calling on him in a tone of command to be silent.

The voice replied: “I will roar like a bear, like a wild ass, like a woman bringing forth a child!

“The chastisement has already fallen on thy incest. God afflicts thee with the sterility of the mule!”

And peals of laughter burst forth, like the chopping of waves.

Vitellius insisted on remaining. The interpreter, in an impassive tone, repeated in the language of the Romans all the insults which Iaokanann roared out in his own. The tetrarch and Herodias were forced twice to submit to them. He panted for breath, whilst she, with open mouth, stared at the bottom of the pit.

The dreadful man threw back his head, and,

grasping the bars, applied closely against them his face, which looked like a mass of brushwood with two live coals glittering in it.



“Ah! it is thou, Jezebel! Thou didst capture his heart with the creaking of thy shoes; thou didst neigh like a mare; thou didst spread thy couch on the mountain to accomplish thy sacrifices!

“The Lord will pull off thy eardrops, thy purple robes, thy flaxen veils, the links on thine arms, the rings on thy feet, and the little gold crescents that quiver on thy brow, thy mirrors of ivory, thy fans of ostrich-plumes, the mother-of-pearl pattens which raise thy stature, the pride of thy diamonds, the perfume of thy hair, the paint of thy nails, all the artifices of thy luxury, and the pebbles will be missing from the roads in order that the adulteress may be stoned!”

She cast a look around, as if seeking for protection. The Pharisees hypocritically lowered their eyes. The Sadducees turned away their heads, as if afraid of offending the proconsul. Antipas looked as if he were dying.

The voice swelled, increased, rolled with thunders that rent the air, and, the echoes in the mountains repeating it, it fulminated against Machærus with multiplied crashes.

“Sprawl in the dust, daughter of Babylon! Go and grind flour! Take off thy girdle! Untie thy shoe! Tuck up thy garments! Pass across the rivers! Thy shame will be unveiled! Thy opprobrium will be seen! Thy sobs will break thy teeth! The Eternal execrates the stench of thy

crimes! Accursed one! accursed one! Die like a bitch!"

The trap was shut down; the lid fell over the opening once more. Mannæi would fain have strangled Iaokanann.

Herodias disappeared. The Pharisees were scandalised. Antipas, standing in the midst of them, tried to justify himself.

"Doubtless," said Eleazar, by way of answer, "it is right for a man to marry the wife of his brother; but then Herodias was not a widow, and furthermore she had a child, which constitutes an abomination."

"Error! error!" was the rejoinder of the Sadducee Jonathan. "The Law condemns these marriages without absolutely proscribing them."

"No matter! People judge me very unfairly," said Antipas; "for, indeed, Absalom lay with his father's wives, Judah with his daughter-in-law, Ammon with his sister, and Lot with his daughters."

Aulus, who had just been sleeping, reappeared at that moment. When he was informed about the matter, he expressed his approval of the tetrarch's conduct. A man ought not to cause himself any

inconvenience on account of such silly things; and he laughed a great deal at the disapprobation of the priests and the rage of Iaokanann.

Herodias, in the middle of the steps in front of the castle, turned round towards him. "Thou art wrong, my master! He orders the people to refuse to pay the impost."

"Is that true?" asked the chief of the publicans forthwith.

The responses were for the most part in the affirmative. The tetrarch added new force to them by his own testimony.

Vitellius thought that the prisoner might take flight; and as the conduct of Antipas appeared to him rather questionable, he placed sentinels at the doorways along the walls and in the courtyard.



Then he proceeded towards his own apartment. The deputation of priests accompanied him.

Without broaching the subject of the sacrificial office, each of them gave expression to his own grievances.

They all beset him. He sent them away.

Jonathan quitted him when he saw, in an embrasure, Antipas chatting with a man who had long hair and wore a white robe, an Essene; and he regretted having spoken in his favour.

One reflection had consoled the tetrarch. He had no longer anything to do with Iaokanann; the Romans would take charge of him. What a relief!

Phanuel was, at that moment, walking on the sentinel's round on the ramparts.

Antipas called him, and, pointing towards the soldiers: "They are the strongest! I am unable to set him free! It is not my fault!"

The courtyard was empty. The slaves had lain down to rest. On the ruddy glow of the sky, which made the horizon seem on flame, the least objects which had a perpendicular direction detached themselves in black. Antipas distinguished the salt-walks at the other side of the Dead Sea, and no longer saw the tents of the Arabians.

Without doubt they were gone. The moon rose up; a feeling of restfulness descended into his heart.

Phanuel, in a dejected frame of mind, remained for some time with his chin resting on his chest. At length he disclosed what he had to say.

Since the beginning of the month he had studied the sky before daybreak, the constellation of Perseus being at the zenith; Agalah scarcely showed itself; Algol shone less; Mira Cœti had disappeared: whence he augured the death of a notable man that very night at Machærus. Who could it be? Vitellius was too well surrounded. Iakannann would not be executed. "Then it is myself!" thought the tetrarch. Perchance the Arabians were going to come back. The proconsul might discover his relations with the Parthians! The priests were escorted by assassins from Jerusalem; they had daggers under their raiment: and the tetrarch had no doubt in his mind as to the accuracy of Phanuel's interpretation of the stars.

He conceived the idea of having recourse to Herodias. He hated her, nevertheless. But she would give him courage; and all the bonds of the witchery to which he had formerly submitted were not broken.

When he entered her apartment, cinnamon was smoking over a porphyry basin, and powders, unguents, cloudlike fabrics, embroideries lighter than feathers, were scattered about.

He made no reference to Phanuel's prediction, nor to his fear of the Jews and the Arabians; she would have accused him of cowardice. He only spoke about the Romans. He had not been told by Vitellius anything concerning the latter's military plans. He supposed him to be a friend of Caius, who was on intimate terms with Agrippa; and so he would be sent into exile, or, possibly, they would put him to death.

Herodias, with a disdainful indulgence, tried to reassure him. At last she drew out of a little chest a fantastic-looking medal, adorned with the profile of Tiberius. This was sufficient to make the lictors turn pale, and to dissolve any accusations.

Antipas, moved by a feeling of gratitude, asked her how she had got it.

"I was made a present of it," was her reply.

Under a door-curtain, facing them, a naked arm protruded, — a youthful arm, charming, and, as it were, rounded in ivory by Polycleetus. In a fashion slightly awkward, yet graceful withal, it went div-

ing about through the air to get hold of a tunic which had been left through forgetfulness on a stool beside the wall. An old woman passed it on to her softly, drawing aside the curtain.

The tetrarch had a flash of recollection, though he failed to recall the exact circumstances to his mind.

“Does this slave belong to thee?”

“What concern is that of thine?” replied Herodias.





CHAPTER III.

THE guests filled the hall wherein
the feast was to be held.

It had three naves, like a basilica, which were
separated by columns made of algum-wood, with

capitals of bronze covered with carvings. Two galleries with railed openings rested on the naves; and a third in gold filigree swelled out in the background, opposite an immense semicircle, which opened at the other end.

Candelabra, burning on the tables, which were ranged all along the walls of the building, formed bushes of flame amid the cups of painted earthenware, the cubes of snow, and the masses of grapes; but these red splendours were gradually lost to view, owing to the height of the ceiling; and luminous points glittered through the branches, like stars in the night. Through the opening of the great bay of the structure, flambeaux could be seen on the terraces of houses; for Antipas was entertaining his friends, his people, and all who presented themselves. Slaves, alert as dogs, with their toes in felt sandals, were passing round with trays in their hands.

The table assigned to the proconsul occupied, under the gilded tribune, a platform made of boards of sycamore. Babylonian carpets formed a sort of pavilion around him.

Three beds of ivory, one in front, and two at the sides, contained Vitellius, his son, and Antipas;

the proconsul was close to the door on the left, Aulus on the right, and the tetrarch in the middle.

He wore a heavy black cloak, whose texture was incapable of being distinguished, owing to the colours with which it was dyed, while his cheeks were painted, his beard was trimmed in the shape of a fan, and his head, over which powder of azure had been scattered, was surmounted by a diadem of precious stones.

Vitellius wore his purple baldric, which descended diagonally over a linen toga. Aulus had the sleeves of his violet silk gown, overlaid with silver, fastened behind his back. His hair was arranged in round masses of curls, which formed different stages; and a necklace of sapphires sparkled over his breast, which was fleshy and white, like that of a woman. Near him, on a mat, a very beautiful child, who was perpetually smiling, sat cross-legged. He had chanced to see this child in the kitchen, from which he found it impossible to keep away, and, being at a loss to remember the little boy's Chaldean name, had simply called him "the Asiatic." From time to time he stretched himself on the triclinium. Then his naked feet looked down on the assembled guests.

On this side were the priests and the officers of Antipas, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the principal personages in the Greek towns, and, below the proconsul, Marcellus, with the publicans, some friends of the tetrarch, the notables of Cana, Ptolemais, and Jericho; then, thrown confusedly together, some mountaineers from Lebanon, and the old soldiers of Herod, — a dozen Thracians, a Gaul, and two Germans, — a few gazelle-hunters, herdsmen from Idumea, the Sultan of Palmyra, and some mariners from Ezion Geber. Each had in front of him a thin cake of dough to wipe his fingers with; and their arms, stretching out like vultures' necks, snatched up olives, pistachio-nuts, and almonds. Every face looked gay under the garland that had been placed above it.

The Pharisees rejected this custom as an example of Roman indecency. They shuddered when they were sprinkled with galbanum and frankincense, a composition reserved for the usages of the Temple.

Aulus rubbed it over his arm-pits, and Antipas promised him an entire load of it, with three bales of that veritable balm which had made Cleopatra covet Palestine.

A captain of his garrison at Tiberias, who had

just arrived, was placed behind him in order to converse with him about any events of an unusual character. But his attention was divided between the proconsul and what the guests were saying at the adjoining tables.

They were talking there about Iaokanann and people of his sort. Simon of Gitta washed away sins with fire. A certain Jesus —

“The worst of all!” exclaimed Eleazar. “What an infamous juggler!”

Behind the tetrarch a man rose up, pale as the border of his chlamys. He stepped down from the platform, and, addressing the Pharisees in a tone of rebuke:

“It is false! Jesus performs miracles!”

“Thou shouldst have brought him here! Pray, enlighten us!”

Thereupon, he related how he, Jacob, having a sick daughter, had repaired to Capernaum, to supplicate the Master to be pleased to cure her. The Master replied, “Return to thy house; she is cured!” And he found her on the threshold, as she had quitted her bed when the dial-pin at the palace had marked the third hour, the very moment at which he had accosted Jesus.

Assuredly, the Pharisees said, by way of rejoinder, there were certain curative practices, certain powerful herbs. Even here, at Machærus, people sometimes found the haaras, which had the power of rendering a person invulnerable; but to cure without seeing or touching was a thing entirely impossible, unless Jesus made use of the demons.

And the friends of Antipas, the leading men of Galilee, shook their heads as they chimed in :

“ Obviously, the demons.”

Jacob, who was standing between their table and that of the priests, maintained a proud and placid silence.

They challenged him to speak : “ Vindicate his power !”

He bent his shoulders, and slowly, in a low tone, as if afraid of himself : “ Do ye not know, then, that this is the Messiah ?”

The priests all looked at each other ; and Vitellius asked for an explanation of the word. A minute elapsed before his interpreter could give the answer.

They applied this name to a deliverer, who would bring to them the enjoyment of every good

thing and dominion over every people. Some entertained the belief that they should look forward to two. The first would be overcome by Gog and Magog, the demons of the North; but the other would exterminate the Prince of Evil; and for centuries past they had been expecting Him every minute.

The priests having held a consultation, Eleazar began to speak.

In the first place, he pointed out, the Messiah would be the offspring of David, and not of a carpenter; He would confirm the Law, — this Nazarene attacked it. And — a stronger argument still — He should be preceded by the coming of Elias.

Jacob replied, "But Elias has come!"

"Elias! Elias!" repeated the guests, down to the other end of the hall. From the force of imagination, they all saw an old man, under a flight of ravens, the thunderbolt setting an altar on flame, idolatrous high priests being cast into the torrents; and the women, in the tribune, thought on the widow of Sarepta.

Jacob exhausted himself by repeating that he knew him; he had seen him; and so had the people.

“His name?”

Then, with all his strength, he exclaimed, “Iaokannann!”

Antipas staggered back, as if he had received a blow in the middle of the chest. The Sadducees sprang at Jacob. Eleazar talked as loudly as ever he could, in order to make himself heard.

When silence had been restored he arranged his cloak, and, like a judge putting questions, said:

“Since the prophet is dead —”

He was interrupted by murmurs. Elias was believed to have merely disappeared.

He got angry with those who caused the interruption, and resuming his inquiry:

“Thinkest thou that he is brought back to life?”

“Why not?” said Jacob.

The Sadducees shrugged their shoulders. Jonathan, straining his little eyes, made a buffoon-like attempt to force a laugh. Nothing could be more absurd than the claim of the body to eternal life; and he declaimed, for the proconsul’s benefit, this verse of a contemporary poet:

“*Nec crescit, nec post mortem durare videtur.*”

But Aulus had bent over the side of the triclinium,

with his forehead perspiring, his face green, and his fists pressed against his stomach.

The Sadducees pretended to be in a state of great agitation; on the following day, the sacrificial office would have been given up to them; Antipas presented an aspect of despair; Vitellius remained impassive. However, he was enduring severe pangs; for he would lose his good fortune with his son.

Aulus had not yet finished his efforts to vomit, when he wanted to eat again.

“Let them give me some scrapings of marble, some Naxos slate, some sea-water,—it matters not what! If I had only taken a bath!”

He crunched snow; then, after having wavered as to whether he would take a Commagene stew, or some red water-ouzes, he made up his mind to have some pumpkins in honey. “The Asiatic” stared at him, this capacity for swallowing indicating, to his mind, a prodigious being, and one of a superior race.

There were served up to the guests, bulls’ kidneys, dormice, nightingales, mince-meats dressed up with branches of vine-leaves; and the priests began a discussion on the resurrection. Ammo-

nus, pupil of Philo the Platonist, considered them stupid, and said so to the Greeks, who scoffed at oracles.

Marcellus and Jacob had joined one another. The former explained to the latter how much happiness he had experienced from the effects of the baptism at Mithra; and Jacob urged him thereupon to follow Jesus. The wines made from the palm and the tamarisk, those of Safed and of Byblos, flowed from the amphoræ into the bowls, from the bowls into the cups, and from the cups down the throats. They began to babble, and to pour out their hearts. Jacim, Jew though he was, no longer concealed his adoration of the planets. A merchant from Aphaka expressed his amazement at the nomads, minutely describing the marvels of the Temple of Hierapolis; and they wanted to know how much the pilgrimage to it would cost. Others clung to the faith in which they had been brought up. A German, who was nearly blind, sang a hymn in praise of that promontory in Scandinavia in which the gods first appeared with the rays on their faces; and some people from Sichem declined to eat turtles, out of respect for the dove, Azima.

Many talked standing up in the middle of the hall ; and the vapour of their breaths, together with the fumes of the candelabra, produced a kind of fog in the surrounding atmosphere.

Phanuel passed along by the walls. He had just been studying the firmament again, but did not advance as far as the tetrarch, dreading the stains of oil, which the Essenes regarded as a great defilement.

Loud knocks were heard at the castle gate.

It was now known that Iaokanann was imprisoned there. Some men with torches had climbed up the ascent in front of the fortress. In the ravine, a black mass of people had crowded together ; and, from time to time, they kept howling :

“ Iaokanann ! Iaokanann ! ”

“ It puts everything out of order ! ” said Jonathan.

“ If it goes on, we shall have no more money ! ” added the Pharisees. And recriminations burst forth :

“ Protect us ! ”

“ Let an end be put to it ! ”

“ Thou art abandoning religion ! ”

“Impious, just like the Herods!”

“Less than ye are!” retorted Herod. “It was my father who built your Temple!”

Then the Pharisees, the sons of outlaws, the partisans of Mathias, blamed the tetrarch for the crimes of his family.

They had angular skulls, bristling hair, weak hands, like those of criminals, flat noses, big round eyes, and a bull-dog look in their faces. A dozen scribes and servants of the priests, brought up on the offal of holocausts, made a dash towards the platform, and with knives they threatened Antipas, who harangued them, whilst the Sadducees made a feeble show of defending him. He perceived Mannæi, and made a sign to him to go out, Vitellius indicating by the expression of his countenance that these things were no concern of his.

The Pharisees, seated on their triclinia, lashed themselves into a state of demoniacal fury. They smashed the dishes in front of them. The favourite stew of Mæcenus had been served up to them, — wild ass’s flesh, — an unclean meat.

Aulus jeered at them about the ass’s head, to which, it was said, they should do honour, and gave

utterance to other sarcasms with regard to their antipathy to pork. It was doubtless because that fat beast had killed their Bacchus, and they must be overfond of wine, seeing that a golden vine had been discovered in the Temple.

The priests did not understand his remarks.



Phineas, a Galilean by descent, refused to translate them. Then he got into an uncontrollable fit of rage, which was increased by the fact that "the Asiatic," seized with terror, had disappeared; and he disparaged the entire banquet, declaring that the dishes were vulgar, their contents not having been sufficiently disguised. He was somewhat appeased by the sight of some Syrian sheep's tails, — which were really nothing better than lumps of fat!

To Vitellius the character of the Jews appeared hideous. Their god might be Moloch, whose altars he had met on his journey ; and the sacrifices of children came back to his mind with the story of the man whom they mysteriously fattened. His Latin's heart swelled with disgust at their intolerance, their iconoclastic fury, their brutish love of stumbling-blocks.

The proconsul wanted to depart. Aulus refused to go. With his gown lowered to his hips, he lay behind a heap of eatables, having already consumed too much to be able to take any more, and yet obstinately resolved not to leave them behind.

The excitement of the people increased. They gave themselves up to plans for achieving their independence. The former glory of Israel was recalled, and it was pointed out that all their conquerors had been chastised, — Antigone, Crassus, Varus.

“ Wretches ! ” said the proconsul ; for he understood Syriac : his interpreter only served the purpose of giving him time to answer.

Antipas very quickly drew forth the medal of the Emperor, and, trembling as he gazed at it,

presented the side of it whereon the image appeared.

The panels of the gold tribune suddenly opened ; and, with a glare of wax-tapers, in the midst of her women slaves, and surrounded by festoons of anemone, Herodias appeared, her head crowned with an Assyrian mitre, attached to her forehead by a chin-piece. Her hair spread in spirals over a scarlet peplum, cut open all along the sleeves. Two monsters in stone, like those who guarded the treasure of the Atrides, stood close beside the entrance to the tribune, so that she resembled Cybele supported by her lions ; and from the top of the balustrade which looked down on Antipas, with a libation-bowl in her hand, she exclaimed :

“Long life to Cæsar !”

This expression of homage was repeated by Vitellius, Antipas, and the priests.

But at that moment there came from the lower end of the hall a hum of surprise and admiration. A young girl had just entered.

Under a light blue veil, which hid from view her bosom and her head, one could see the arches over her eyes, the calcedonies of her ears, the whiteness of her skin. An upper garment of shot

doubts were raised as to his integrity. Madame Aubain investigated his accounts, and was not long in making out a list of his dishonest acts — misappropriation of arrears, secret sales of timber, false receipts, etc. Moreover, he had an illegitimate child, and “relations with a woman from Dozulé.” She was sorely grieved by this shameful conduct. In the month of March, 1853, she was attacked by a pain in the chest; her tongue seemed covered with fume; leeches failed to relieve the oppression, and on the ninth evening of her illness she expired, having just reached her sixty-second year. She was supposed not to have been so old, on account of her dark hair, the head-bands of which were drawn around her pale face. She was regretted by few of her friends, her haughty manners having alienated them from her.

Félicité wept for her as servants do not usually weep for their employers. That “Madame” should have died before her troubled her thoughts, appeared to her opposed to the order of things, improper and unnatural.

Ten days later (the time that it took to come from Besançon) the heirs made their appearance

on the scene. The daughter-in-law ransacked the drawers, picked out certain articles of furniture, sold the rest, and then went back to the Registry.

Madame's armchair, her loo table, her foot-warmer, and the eight chairs were gone! The places where the engravings had hung were indicated by yellow squares in the middle of the partitions. They had carried off the two bedsteads, with their mattresses, and in the press could no longer be seen any of Virginie's little belongings! Félicité passed up the different flights of stairs stupefied with grief.

Next day, there was a bill on the door; the apothecary shouted into her ear that the house was to be sold.

She tottered, and was obliged to sit down.

The thing that crushed her most of all was having to give up her room — so convenient for poor Loulou. Casting round him a look of anguish, she invoked the aid of the Holy Ghost, and she had actually contracted the idolatrous practice of saying her prayers kneeling before the parrot. Now and then the sunbeams, penetrating through the skylight, struck the glass eye and made a great

silk, while covering her shoulders, was fastened around her waist by a girdle made of worked gold. Her black drawers were spangled with forms of mandrakes, and in an indolent fashion she made a clacking sound with her little slippers of humming-bird's down.

When she reached the top of the platform, she removed her veil. It was Herodias as she had looked years before, in all the fresh loveliness of her youth.

Then she began to dance. Her feet crossed one another, to the rhythm of a flute and of a pair of crotala. Her rounded arms were inviting some one who was always flying away. She pursued him, lighter than a butterfly, like a Psyche filled with curiosity, like a wandering soul ; and she seemed to be just going to take wing.

The mournful strains of the gongras were substituted for the crotala. Dejection had succeeded hope. Her attitudes gave expression to unuttered sighs, and her entire person conveyed such an idea of languor that it was hard to tell whether she were weeping for a god or dying in his embrace. With half-closed eyelids, she twisted her waist, swayed her body with the undulations of a swell-

ing billow, and set her two breasts quivering. And still her face remained immovable, and the motion of her feet did not stop.

Vitellius compared her to Mnester, the pantomimus. Aulus was still vomiting. The tetrarch was lost in a dream, and no longer thought about Herodias. He fancied he had seen her beside the Sadducees. Then the vision faded into the background.

This was no vision. She had educated, far from Machærus, her daughter Salome, so that the tetrarch should be smitten with love for this girl; and the idea was a good one. She was sure of it now!

This, then, was the transport of the love which desired to be satiated. She danced like the priestesses of the Indians, like the Nubian girls of the Cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Lydia. She flung herself back in all directions, like a flower shaken by the tempest. The brilliants in her ears leaped up and down; the shot silk on her back made a play of colours. From her arms, from her feet, from her garments burst forth invisible sparks, which inflamed the men who gazed upon her.

The tinkling of a harp was heard; the throng



Chompeilly de

of guests responded to it with shouts of applause. Spreading out her legs without bending her knees, she stooped down so effectively that her chin touched the floor ; and the nomads, accustomed to abstinence, the soldiers of Rome, who were experts in debauchery, the avaricious publicans, and the old priests soured by disputations, all, dilating their nostrils, palpitated with lust.

Then she whirled frantically around the table of Antipas, like a sorcerer's circle ; and he, in a voice broken with sobs of voluptuousness, cried out to her, "Come ! come !" She still kept whirling round ; the dulcimers sounded so loudly that it seemed as if they would crack asunder ; the guests yelled with delight. But the tetrarch, in a louder voice, exclaimed :

"Come ! come ! Thou shalt have Capernaum ! The plain of Tiberias ! My citadels ! The half of my kingdom !"

She threw herself on her hands, with her heels in the air, ran thus over the platform, like a huge beetle, and stopped abruptly.

The nape of her neck and her vertebræ formed a right angle. The coloured sheaths which enveloped her legs, passing over her shoulders like rain-

bows, followed her face to within a cubit's length of the ground. Her lips were painted; her eyebrows were very black; her eyes almost terrible; and little beads of perspiration on her forehead seemed like a vapour on white marble. She did not speak. They cast glances at each other.

There was a snapping of fingers in the tribune. She went up to it, reappeared, and, with a slightly defective pronunciation, uttered these words in a childish fashion:

"I wish that thou would give me, in a dish, the head" — she forgot the name, but presently continued, with a smile — "the head of Iaokanann!"

The tetrarch sank down utterly prostrated, crushed.

He was bound by his word; and the guests waited in a state of feverish expectancy. But the death which had been predicted for him might, perchance, be turned aside by assigning it to another? If Iaokanann were truly Elias, he might escape from it; if he were not, the murder was no longer a matter of any consequence.

Mannæi was at his side, and understood his purpose.

Vitellius recalled him in order to confide to him the watchword — sentinels to be placed on guard round the pit.

It was a relief. In a minute all would be over.

However, Mannæi was not very prompt in carrying out his task.

He reëntered, but in a state of violent agitation.

For forty years he had exercised the functions of executioner. It was he who had drowned Aristobulus, strangled Alexander, burned Mathias alive, decapitated Yosimus Pappus, Joseph, and Antipater; and yet he did not dare to kill Iaokannan. His teeth were chattering; his entire frame was trembling.

He had seen, in front of the pit, the Great Angel of the Samaritans all covered over with eyes, and brandishing a huge sword, red, and jagged like a flame. Two soldiers, whom he brought in as witnesses, could say the same.

They said, however, that they had seen nothing save a Jewish captain, who was no longer alive.

The fury of Herodias overflowed in a torrent of insults, appealing to the lowest instincts, and cal-

culated to arouse a thirst for bloodshed. She broke her nails against the grating of the tribune, and the two sculptured lions seemed to bite her shoulders and to roar like her.

Antipas followed her example. The priests, the soldiers, the Pharisees, all clamoured for vengeance; and the rest joined in, indignant at having their pleasure retarded.

Mannæï, hiding his face, left the hall.

The guests thought the time still longer than on the first occasion. They were getting tired of waiting.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps reverberated in the passages. The feeling of uneasiness was becoming intolerable.

In came the head; and Mannæï held it up by the hair with his hand, proud of the plaudits that greeted him.

When he had placed it on a dish he presented it to Salome.

She slowly ascended into the tribune; after the lapse of several minutes, the head was brought back by that old woman whom the tetrarch had noticed in the morning on the flat roof of a house, and subsequently in the apartment of Herodias.

He drew back in order not to appear to have seen her. Vitellius cast on her a glance of indifference.

Mannæi stepped down from the platform, and ex-



hibited the head to the Roman captains, then to all those who were supping on that side.

They examined it. The sharp blade of the instrument, sliding downward, had made an inci-

sion in the jaw. A convulsive movement had tightly drawn the corners of the mouth. Blood, already clotted, was sprinkled over the beard. The closed eyelids had the sallow hue of shells, and the candelabra flung rays of light around it.

It was brought to the priests' table. A Pharisee turned it about curiously; and Mannæï, having again set it upright, placed it before Aulus, thus waking him up from a sleep. Through the openings of the lids the dead eyeballs and the drowsy eyeballs seemed to be saying something to one another.

Mannæï next presented it to Antipas. Tears were streaming down the tetrarch's cheeks.

The lights were out. The guests had gone; and there now remained in the hall only Antipas, with his hands pressed against his temples, and his eyes still fixed on the head which had been cut off; whilst Phanuel, standing in the middle of the great nave, kept murmuring some prayers, with his arms extended.

At the moment when the sun was just rising, two men, who had been despatched some time

before by Iaokanann, suddenly arrived with the response so long hoped for.

They confided it to Phaniel, whom it threw into a transport of joy.



Then he pointed out to them the mournful object on the dish amid the remains of the feast. One of the men said to him :

“Be consoled! He hath gone down amongst the dead to announce the Christ!”

The Essene now understood these words :

“In order that He may increase, it is necessary that I should diminish.”

And all three, having taken the head of Iakannan, went off in the direction of Galilee. As it was very heavy, each of them carried it in turn.



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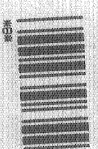


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"In the last years of his life my uncle found an extreme fascination in reviving his youth. He has written 'A Simple Heart' after his mother's death. To paint the town in which she was born, the hearth round which she had played, her cousins, the companions of her childhood, was to find her again; and this sweet emotion has helped to draw from his pen his most touching pages,—those perhaps in which he has, more than anywhere else, allowed the man to reveal himself through the veil of the writer. Let us merely recall that scene between Madame Aubain and her servant-maid, when they place together in a row the trifling objects that belonged to Virginie. A big, black straw hat that belonged to my grandmother awakened in my uncle a similar emotion. He took down the relic from the nail, looked at it in silence; his eyes grew moist, and he replaced it respectfully."

These pious confidences bring to light one side of Flaubert's nature which he did not affect to reveal in his works,—the sensitive side. So, then, this time it is on his personal recollections that he has worked; he has partly applied to himself his process of moral dissection. Whereas, on other

occasions, he has devoted himself to living by the power of imagination the lives of his characters.

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